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A SNAPT GOLD RING.

A SNAPT GOLD RING.

BY

FREDERICK WEDMORE.

"The hour which might have been, yet might not be,
Which man's and woman's heart conceived and bore
Yet whereof life was barren,—on what shore
Bides it the breaking of Time's weary sea!"—D. G. ROSSETTI.



IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

LONDON:

SMITH, ELDER & CO., 15, WATERLOO PLACE.

1871.

250. 7. 295.

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A SNAPT GOLD RING.

CHAPTER I.

THE advent of Mr. Crabbe's players, and the approaching opening of the Queen's Rooms, interested at all events a portion of Scarborough society. Little Mr. Andrews, who had been the forerunner of the company, used his best exertions to awaken public curiosity, and his efforts were—to do him justice—as successful as they were ingenious. Not only were there paragraphs in the newspapers and placards on the walls—the legitimate channels of advertisement, leading to notoriety—but Mr. Andrews caused to be spread amongst inhabitants and visitors

many rumours respecting the members of the company. It was not important that these rumours should be correct, but it was important that they should be striking. And if thereby the feelings of two or three innocent persons should be pained, or their personal reputation injured, these results would not be appreciated by the little stage-manager, for a reason quite conclusive—they would have no detrimental effect upon the receipts of “the treasury.”

It happened that an amateur actor—Mr. Charles Finsbury—had joined the company of Buckingham Crabbe. His ability for the stage was less reckoned upon than Kate Lemon's; but he had paid a handsome fee for the benefit of a fortnight's engagement. He was to play in two good parts, previously chosen, and the stipulation had cost him thirty pounds. Andrews had had, as he observed, “a finger in the pie,” and he was not of opinion that “the treasury” would be sufficiently advantaged by the receipt of Mr. Finsbury's fee and of such money as the public might pay to see performances which

they would imagine to be arranged in accordance with usual rule—a prominent actor in an important part. Mr. Crabbe determined that the words “a distinguished amateur” should be inserted in the play-bills, after Mr. Finsbury’s name, and this gave a hint to the wily Andrews which he was not slow to take.

It is inconvenient, as our stage-director had more than once experienced, to put a falsehood upon paper, since it is then possible to explicitly refute it. But it is easy to circulate false rumours in conversation ; and at a watering-place the rumour that is not in print flies faster than the rumour that is. Mr. Finsbury was a young man of honest family ; he was well-educated, and was in easy circumstances. Mr. Andrews accordingly started the report that he was the son of a nobleman who had disinherited him. This was a tempting bait, and Scarborough was expected to take it. But a still better one was in store.

Meanwhile, rehearsal followed rehearsal, and Kate had learned two parts—uncertain which

she was to play upon the opening night. First, she had learned the part of "Lucy" in *The Rivals*—"Lydia Languish's" brisk young 'tire-woman, who acts stupidly when it suits her purpose, and is at one and the same time in the confidential pay of all the intriguers in the story. Then Mr. Buckingham Crabbe, on the suggestion of his stage-manager, had hesitated as to whether he would begin the season with the great comedy of last century life in Bath. The same author, he was reminded, had written a piece which, though adapted from *The Relapse* of an older dramatist, had been brought out as *A Trip to Scarborough*. Would not that be a better attraction for the first night of the season?

"We must have a full house, sir,—we must have a full house," Andrews had protested, "and there's nothing like bringing things home to men's business and bosoms, so to speak. When they see *A Trip to Scarborough* announced, half of 'em will think it a new comedy."

But Crabbe was not to be persuaded at once. While in a state of hesitation, he said to Andrews, "Miss Lemon plays in *The Rivals*, you see, and I would not let her play in both. Yet she ought to be in the first night's bill."

"Oh, certainly, certainly! She's much too good-looking to be spared. Yes, certainly. Lemon ought to be in the first night's bill."

"What do you propose, then, Andrews?" asked the chief.

The wizened old man took a chair, and sat with straightly-extended legs, and with one hand over his forehead. It was with him a favourite if not a graceful attitude of meditation.

"Sir," he answered, "put her into a farce. Everybody sees the farce on the first night."

"Not a bad idea, by any means."

"*The Area Belle* will do as well as you could wish. It will do for your old comedian, sir, who imitates Bedford, and for the man who thinks himself better than Toole."

"Would to goodness the public thought so too!" said Mr. Crabbe.

"The girl's part in *The Area Belle* is very nice and lively, and it would suit Lemon to a 't.'"

"Well, then, rehearse it," said the manager. "No harm to be prepared, in case I don't begin with *The Rivals*. And rehearse *A Trip to Scarborough* immediately. I don't play in it, you know; but anyhow, it will be produced early."

On further consideration Mr. Crabbe decided to set at naught his stage-manager's suggestion, because its adoption would deprive him of the opportunity of acting on the first night of the season.

"Andrews," said he, to the subservient old man, late on the day of their last reported talk, "we will open with the other farce you have rehearsed, and with *The Rivals*. I play 'Captain Absolute,' and the whole strength of the company is shown to advantage. Miss Vansittart is 'Lydia Languish,' Miss Tellson is 'Julia,' Miss Lemon is 'Lucy,'—but you know the cast already. We must have a

couple more rehearsals. Get the bills printed at once. Display my name as 'Captain Absolute,' call Finsbury 'a distinguished amateur,' and put after Kate Lemon's name 'her first appearance on any stage.' Amateur theatricals don't count as appearances, you know."

"Certainly not, sir ; certainly not."

"Then underline *A Trip to Scarborough* and *The Area Belle*. We bring them out next week."

To "underline" is in theatrical parlance to announce for future performance a certain piece or pieces. It was settled then that Kate was to appear first of all in Sheridan's original comedy, and that a few days afterwards she was to take the leading part in a modern farce.

"'Lucy's' is not a pleasant part," said she to Charley Hassell over the little tea-table, half an hour after his arrival, on the day of the first performance. "She is a nasty, sly, disagreeable girl."

"Lively though," replied Charley. "On the whole you haven't much to complain of, for a débût, you know, Kate."

"Ah! Perhaps not. But I will play 'Lydia Languish' some day, Mr. Charley."

"I declare, Kate, you ain't a bit nervous," remarked young Hassell in surprise. "I expected to see you with a fair share of stage fright."

"Mother's nervous for me," answered Kate. "We mustn't both of us give way to it."

"They're a disgustin', quizzical, disagreeable set o' people!" exclaimed Mrs. Hassell, pausing over the sugar-basin. "The young woman as calls herself Miss Vansittart is as stuck up as she can be, and gives 'erself airs the like of which I never saw. Miss Tellson is a little flirting nincumpoop. Crabbe is a pompous fellow, though he's the best of the lot. As for Andrews, I 'ate him. He's a little beast, and no better."

"They know," said Kate, "that I'm new to the profession, and yet, because we ain't rich,

you see, I cannot possibly be called 'a distinguished amateur.' So they think no great shakes of me at the Queen's Rooms, Charley. But I mean to disappoint them. If they were kind to me, very likely I should be nervous now; but they're distant and stand-off-ish; and I mean to keep my wits about me, and act my very best."

"Bravo!" said Charley. "I shall sit in the pit and break the floor down with stamping when you come on."

"Don't do any such thing, or they'll say you are in love with me. You don't know how they talk."

"They are very disrespect'ful," remarked Mrs. Hassell, seriously. "Little Mr. Andrews, who is not the master there, after all, actually calls my child 'Lemon' behind her back."

"Oh, never mind!" said Kate briskly. "Now, it is time for us to be off."

The three walked together to the Rooms, and reached them a few minutes before the hour for opening the doors. Of course the

upper class of visitors were not in waiting; but a crowd of play-goers, who were to fill the gallery, had already assembled.

"Doost see yon three?" said one little street or errand-boy to another.

"Hey! Yon three coomin' alon': t' old woman, with t' gentleman an' yung laädy?"

"Aye. T' yung laädy's one o' t' actresses," was shouted loud enough for Kate to hear: "I saw 'er goa in at t' players' door t' oother daäy."

"Yorkshire: not London!" whispered Charley, to the younger of his two friends.

In a minute, Kate and her mother had disappeared through a private entrance. Charley stood back, to enter when he conveniently could; and two policemen wedged their way in front of the crowd, to prevent a rush when the Rooms should be opened. Then, without further delay, the iron bars were taken down from behind the doors, the locks were turned audibly, and amidst cries of "Keep back theer!" "Whoa's pushin'?" "Neow then!"

"Ger' out wi' yer!" "I'll warm tha'!" the mannerly crowd surged into the passage, paid its sixpences, and scrambled upstairs to the gallery.

The room was badly lighted. The gallery was only at the back of it, and to prevent the chance of any one in the area being annoyed by the populace, the first two rows of this gallery had been partitioned off from the rest and under the name of "amphitheatre stalls" the seats were let at a shilling a-piece. Below the gallery, and covered by it, was the "pit," to which the entrance fee was eighteenpence. There were no dress-boxes, but in front of the pit—as at a regularly constructed theatre—were seven or eight rows of stalls. To the stalls the price of admission was four shillings, and bonnets were not allowed, as Mr. Buckingham Crabbe wished to attract fashionable visitors and to have "bespeaks" from the principal hotels.

At half-past seven, the band, numbering five performers, emerged from under the stage and was seated in its little orchestra. The house

was now full and the gallery already inclined to be demonstrative. Then, the prompter's bell, and the curtain rose.

The programme was a long one : first a farce, then the comedy, and lastly a ballet by the three Sisters Petronilla, "from the principal metropolitan theatres." The farce was performed as well as it deserved to be, but it did not rouse the enthusiasm of the house. It had, however, the desired effect of raising expectation—as a little introductory piece generally does—and when the curtain was lifted for Sheridan's comedy, the last idler had strolled into the stalls from dinner, the last busy artisan had pushed his way into the amphitheatre or gallery, and there was nothing but silence and strained attention from roof to floor.

Miss Vansittart—the "Lydia Languish" of the evening—came up to Kate and her mother, in the green-room, when the farce was over : an act of condescension very unusual in a young woman who prided herself somewhat offensively on her position as "leading lady." Now,

however, her friendliness was overwhelming, and it was with an expression of deep sympathy that she remarked to Kate, "Keep up your courage, my dear : they say it is a terribly cold audience for a *débütante* to face."

Mrs. Hassell trembled with fright at this intelligence, but Kate saw rivalry under the guise of sympathy, and promptly answered, "Oh, thank you, Miss Vansittart! I'm told that the *front* of the house is generally good-natured."

"That girl can be pert as well as presuming," said the leading actress to Mr. Crabbe, when she had crossed the room and was safely beyond ear-shot.

"Keep up your pluck, ma'am ; there's really nothing to fear for her," said a good-tempered comedian to Kate's mother.

To Charley Hassell, sitting in the pit, the first scene was valueless : it was not till the second that Kate appeared. "Lucy" is in that scene the simple lady's-maid who has been inquiring at Bath libraries for novels for her

mistress. The sliding-boards were parted, and their parting disclosed "Lydia Languish" lounging on a sofa and "Lucy" standing before her, dressed as for a walk.

Was this Kate? So deliberate, so quiet, so demure; with downcast eyes and hands neatly folded. Could this really be the brisk shop-girl, brisk sewing-girl, of Bond Street, who was not afraid to look all London in the face, and who kept life and motion in the little house at Notting Hill?

Presently the scene changed. When "Lucy" next appears, it is with "Mrs. Malaprop," who reproves her for the ease with which she is imposed upon. Kate heard this with all submissiveness, and duly promised greater wariness for the future. Then the representative of "Mrs. Malaprop" departed, and our Kate, left to herself, had to express "Lucy's" delight in "giving simplicity a little respite." She was brightness itself: as sparkling as the Kate of Notting Hill, but very sly into the bargain.

"Let me see to what account have I turned

my simplicity lately.—[*Looks at a paper.*] For abetting Miss Lydia Languish in a design of running away with an ensign!—in money, sundry times, twelve pound twelve; gowns, five; hats, ruffles, caps, etc., etc., numberless!—From the said ensign, within this last month, six guineas and a half.—About a quarter's pay!—Item, from Mrs. Malaprop for betraying the young people to her—when I found matters were likely to be discovered—two guineas, and a black paduasoy.—Item, from Mr. Acres, for carrying divers letters—which I never delivered—two guineas, and a pair of buckles.—Item, from Sir Lucius O' Trigger, three crowns, two gold pocket-pieces, and a silver snuff-box!—Well done, simplicity!" *

As the curtain fell, a hearty cheer broke forth from pit and gallery. In the stalls, the people were too genteel to be enthusiastic. But Charley was content with the reception given to Kate, and more than content with her performance.

* Vide *The Rivals*, Act i. scene 2.

The orchestra struck up a familiar waltz ; people stood in their places, and looked round the house, or else moved to the refreshment bar. Gradually they settled again, and again the curtain rose.

In the second act "Lucy" makes her last appearance, in an interview bordering on flirtation with "Sir Lucius O'Trigger," and in a subsequent conversation with "Fag," young "Absolute's" valet. As far as Kate was concerned, the scene was admirably acted, and the audience recognized that it was.

At the end, Charley was impatient to go and congratulate the *débûtante* ; but admission to the little green-room was not permitted to the *soi-disant* cousins of actresses, and Charley sat in the theatre for another quarter of an hour. Then he went out into the street, to walk restlessly about near the stage-door until Kate with her mother should appear. The two soon emerged. Kate's face, for the first time young Hassell had ever seen it so, was almost anxious. Its look of strained expectancy

made it finer and even more strongly interesting than it was accustomed to be.

"How did I do, Charley? The whole truth, mind!"

"You were admirable—admirable!" he exclaimed. "You are *sure* to get on."

He saw by the dim lamplight of the Scarborough streets how her face sparkled with pleasure.

"Come!" she said, pressing his arm half involuntarily; "let us make haste home. Come, mother!"

Moments of personal triumph are moments in which feelings are disclosed, for excitement must find a vent. She had greeted him in a tone less light than of old, and had turned to him with a look less merely friendly. As Charley walked away with her arm in his—the mother trudging by the side—he knew that the night's success had not been only Kate's, nor only in the theatre.

CHAPTER II.

As September advances, Scarborough congratulates itself on becoming more "select"—a spurious adjective to describe a spurious virtue. The season of excursions is over, and the place of tradesmen from the seaport towns and of manufacturers from the West Riding is gradually filled up by Yorkshire county families and an increasing detachment of Londoners.

When Kate was at rehearsal, young Hassell was accustomed to walk upon the Spa, and frequent lounging in this haunt of idlers brought him into occasional talk with men who lounged there like himself. Now Charley, though not a gentleman by birth, was a gentleman in feeling, character, and bearing. It is true that he was the son of a shopkeeper, and that his

garments, to a critical eye, were wanting in line and finish. But happily, the patent of gentility is neither in the gift of Savile Row nor in that of the Herald's College; and Charley Hassell had used his freedom to recast himself in the mould for which he was meant by Nature.

No wonder then that Bernard Vipan did not hesitate to talk with him—Vipan, the most exclusive of money-lacking aristocrats, who pardoned the absence of old blood only through the presence of new brains. The two gossipped together one brilliant autumn morning, standing against the low wall which runs by the side of the promenade and is built up from the beach and washed by the water.

"Been to the theatre here?" asked the man of family who had gone into the City to seek new fortunes.

"Yes, several times," said Charley; "to the theatre and to the Queen's Rooms."

"I've patronised the latter, chiefly," Vipan observed. "Not much to be done with one's evenings here."

• “I don’t like going to a theatre by previous appointment,” said Charley: “I like ‘popping into’ one. The difference is that in the first case it seems a business duty—part of your day’s programme—in the second, an incidental pleasure. I care for the acting itself; not for its accessories.”

“So do I, when there is any to be seen. I hate burlesques, you know. Their object and attraction may be summed up in one word—incongruity. And really there is enough of that in this topsy-turvy world without going to seek for it.”

“Yes,” said young Hassell, “I agree with you completely. It is only a public of fools—that an intelligent actor must despise—that crowds to see ugly men turned into uglier women; to hear Verdi’s worst music made into worse music still; to see how much pink paint will stand upon a woman’s face, and how much ‘ankle’ she will show provided she be paid for it.”

“Good!” drawled Vipan: “decidedly good,

I declare. Quite a tirade too! You ought to print it. Only I confess I never yet saw anything in the world worth being quite so earnest about."

"You are sarcastic," Charley rejoined; not knowing exactly what to say, or with whom he had to deal.

"Very mildly so, you will admit. But tell me, this man Finsbury—the 'distinguished amateur'—who is he?"

"Simply Finsbury. Only that, and nothing more," answered Charley, smilingly.

"No, no. There is some romance about him. He's a fellow of good family, they say; but disinherited. The runaway son of a duke, they declare; but of *what* duke, Heaven knows! Debrett don't tell you. However, I understand that he really is a man of family: quite a gentleman, though on the stage."

"Indeed!" said Charley, who did not care to add that a gentleman on the stage would be no novelty at all.

"Kate Lemon's a fine girl," was the next remark volunteered.

"Yes," said young Hassell, holding his peace as to his personal knowledge of her; yet half in doubt whether he was wise to do so.

"Very fine girl! If I cared much for farces I should go crazy over her performance in *The Area Belle*; but as it is, I prefer her as the servant in *The Rivals*. She shows real enjoyment of her own performance, which now-a-days is very delightful to find, you know. If I knew any London manager, I would say a good word for her. As it is, I declare I will mention her to a friend of mine who is a critic: Ringley, of *The Morning Press*, you know. By-the-by, how old do you think she is?"

"About twenty."

"Really! No more. Dear me! And a very fine girl she is too. But after all, what am I thinking of? She won't be in any need of recommendation from me. The deuce, no! *She* can get plenty of influence. I suppose

there are some actresses in the world who have only their merits to stand upon. 'Pity 'em; that's all!"

"That is exactly the case with Miss Lemon," said Charley, emphatically. "She stands entirely on her own merit, and has nothing else in the world to help her."

"Oh, this is a good joke! Come now, my dear fellow: Mr. — I beg your pardon: really, your name escaped me. Why, Kate Lemon has some of the most powerful influence that an actress can possibly have. 'Merits,' indeed! I'm quite delighted to see she has merits—that she is so very charming, so adorable, and all that sort of thing, you know—but if she were as lifeless as a drumstick, she would get on as well as one could wish."

"What do you mean? I really can't understand," asked Charley, baffled, curious, and half anxious.

"Why, who the deuce is with her here? Surely you must be well aware. Lord Wester-

leigh, is it not? *I* vouch for nothing, you know, and am uncommon rash, if you should happen to be a friend of hers; but everybody tells me that Lord Westerleigh—eh?”

“Let him be hung! She never spoke to him in all her life. Why will people listen to such lies? And when one knave invents them, why in the name of goodness should every fool in Scarborough repeat them?”

“Really, sir,” said Vipan, getting very indignant. “Sir, I beg—— Really, if you have any connection with the young lady, you should say so. And if she is a thousand times your sister, sir, *I* am not a fool for telling you the common talk—the common talk of the place, by Jove!”

“I beg your pardon,” said Charley, restraining himself with difficulty. “You meant no harm at all, and I should be willing to admit it; only, you see, I was taken aback, and——”

“Just so, and very natural, too, if she is a friend of yours. Well, let’s drop the subject. For my part, I am delighted”—he had now

relapsed into carelessness—"to have the virtues of any actress certified to me on what seems competent authority."

"That's a perfectly needless sneer at the profession," said Charley Hassell, who was still very warm, "and one that is thoroughly undeserved."

"Still, if I were you," drawled the other, contentedly, and, perhaps, with even a touch of scorn,—“If I were you, do you know, I should not at this particular moment occupy myself with defending ‘the profession’ in general, but I would address myself to the remedying of a particular scandal. At least, I fancy that would be my course.”

"I ought to thank you for telling me," said Charley, with the courage of real frankness; "but it's hard to be grateful for disagreeable news. Miss Lemon is my uncle's step-daughter—that is the ‘connection.’ Good morning. We may perhaps meet again."

"How the fellow fired up!" thought Bernard Vipian, as Charley was walking rapidly away.

“Not a gentleman, evidently, by his connections. How apt one is to be deceived. He looks like one in face and bearing. . . . But imagine a man waxing wroth at imputations upon the conduct of an actress! Rather good joke, upon my soul!”

“These flippant men of society, who have tried everything, and found everything vanity, —they are only less uncharitable than the Puritans themselves!” thought Charley, striding away from the promenade and gardens.

It was within a day or two of the end of Charley's holiday, and though the information so confidently imparted by Bernard Vipian had made him both angry and indignant, he thought it best, on reflection, to keep the scandal to himself. In a day or two, he would be obliged to leave Kate and her mother. Why should his parting gift to them be the knowledge that while a good girl is doing her best, and doing it admirably, malicious tongues invent, and idle ones repeat, stories which are disgraceful and insulting?

But who had originated this report ? Charley had heard, on competent authority, that the tale about Finsbury had been first circulated by Andrews. What was more likely than that he had also circulated the tale about Lord Westerleigh and Kate ? Under the circumstances, an interview with Andrews and a wholesome word of reprimand and warning to that gentleman, seemed to be the immediate business of Charley.

Next morning, at a time when Kate was on the sands, waiting for a bathing-machine, and when Andrews was habitually at the Queen's Rooms, Charley called on the stage-manager and was admitted into his presence without any difficulty.

"Glad to see you, sir,—very charmed to see you," remarked that functionary, offering a chair. It was the rule of his life to be civil to all men, unless he had clearly something to gain by displaying his sense of an affront. He cherished spite in private : he gave vent to it in actions, not words. He never really felt

insulted, but occasionally he found it convenient to speak as if he did.

"Thank you, sir," said Charley, still standing; "I won't detain you long."

"Anything I can do for you—anything I can do?" asked Mr. Andrews with solicitude. "One thing, surely—congratulate you, as a friend of Miss Lemon's, on her immense success. We are glad to have been able to help her to it. Mr. Crabbe's young ladies are generally fortunate."

"It is a great success, as far as her future is concerned," said young Hassell; "but not very pleasant as far as Scarborough is concerned. She is the object of a villanous rumour, of which, fortunately, she is not herself aware."

"Dear me! What a pity!" observed Andrews, with obvious indifference.

"'What a pity!' Yes, indeed; rather more than 'a pity,' I think. I say it is an intolerable shame, and that the man who spread it is a most contemptible liar!"

"Much to be deprecated. Exceedingly inconsiderate. Much to be deprecated, no doubt. Do take a seat and make yourself comfortable. What is the story, may I ask?"

"Something about Lord Westerleigh, whose face Miss Lemon never once saw."

"Dear me, how painful! What an extremely painful rumour!"

"The thing, once set going, is not very easy to stop," said Charley; "but the long and short of it is, this *shall* be stopped."

"What can I suggest or do, my dear sir? What can I do?"

"A good deal," said Charley, very emphatically.

By this time Andrews knew that he was the suspected person. He determined to retreat from his position in good order, admitting no defeat.

"Well, I fully understand your warmth upon the subject. I assure you I will use every means in my power to arrest this unpleasant report, now that I am honoured by

your confidence. Remember, I am but one man—pretty well known here, however—and I will do my very best.”

“You see,” said Charley, “it is clearly to the interest of Mr. Crabbe—and likewise, I suppose, of his subordinates——”

“They have no interest whatever, my dear sir. Mr. Crabbe is the only person concerned.”

“Oh, indeed! However that may be, those interested in this speculation have every reason to wish to retain Miss Lemon’s services.”

“They are secured under an agreement, my dear sir. Pardon me, why *will* you stand in such a draught?”

“Precisely: ‘under an agreement.’ Had Miss Lemon given a verbal promise, she would be bound in honour to remain. But a clause in an actor’s agreement provides for the payment of a fine if the actor should wish to cut short the engagement. He or she has always the alternative—to finish or to pay the fine. The moment the fine is paid, the thing is atoned.

Miss Lemon is at perfect liberty to pay it and go."

"It is a heavy fine in proportion to her salary. Oh, a very heavy fine!"

"Exactly. In proportion to the salary she is to receive next month, through the generosity of those interested in this speculation, it *is* a heavy fine. But elsewhere she could very soon get a better salary; and, what is more to the point, she is so much liked that you make more out of her every week she stays than you would get by the payment of her fine."

"That is a matter you are ignorant of, Mr. Hassell—quite ignorant, quite ignorant of, my dear sir. But rest assured I fully sympathise with you. And everything shall be done for Miss Lemon's comfort. Good morning, my dear sir. Extremely gratified to be entrusted with the contradiction of an annoying report—extremely gratified, indeed; extr——"

"Done!" murmured Charley, as he came away, whilst Andrews was still showering on him the assurance of his gratification. "The

thing is done, and Kate will be able to go on with her engagement. To quarrel with a manager puts an actress into bad odour; and I have been able to avoid this for her. Kate will do all the better for staying out the three months here."

CHAPTER III.

KATE LEMON's experience of Mr. Crabbe's company was not entirely a disagreeable one. The man who on the opening night had given to her mother a word of encouragement, proved disposed to be very friendly. He became acquainted with Kate during the first fortnight of the season, and took her home to see his wife; so that when Charley Hassell left Scarborough, in the middle of September, Kate felt that there was some substitute for this young ready champion of her cause. Mr. Harper, her new friend, was the "first old man" of the company.

September had passed and October had begun before Mr. Crabbe signified his wishes with regard to the retention of Kate's services,

during the last month in which he had a claim upon them—the month of November. This matter was evidently dependent upon the duration of the season ; since if the plays were to proceed, the manager could not do better for himself than by giving Miss Lemon good parts, and letting the public see as much as was possible of a young lady to whom it had taken a fancy. When the Queen's Rooms had been opened five weeks, there was a conference between Mr. Crabbe and his lieutenant. Mr. Crabbe was himself about to leave, to arrange for the opening of his West Riding Theatre. For more than a fortnight, under any circumstances, for more than a month—perhaps for nearly two months—if the season were extended, Andrews would be left in command of the Queen's Rooms and of the players engaged there.

“What is the exact amount the books show, Andrews?”

“A clear profit of three hundred and fifty one pounds, six shillings ; squared up to last

Saturday night, sir. What I mean to say is, you could leave the town this very Monday with all debts paid and rather over three hundred and fifty pounds in your pockets."

"Minus your commission, you mean?"

"Minus my commission, sir. Yes, exactly so. There is that small deduction to be made."

Charley's surmise had been correct. Andrews did receive a per-centage on the profits of the Scarborough season. His salary as stage manager was always secured to him, and on Scarborough profits—when there were any—he received a commission of fifteen per cent. This was for extra work. Andrews liked work better than pleasure: indeed it *was* pleasure to him—the only kind he cared for. And he cared for it most when it was amply paid.

"Come, my good Andrews. You will pocket a nice round sum of fifty pounds or more, unless you manage to lose it during the remainder of the time we are open. Do

you advise me to keep the house open over the whole three months?"

"No, sir; no, sir: all things considered, I do not. Better be on the safe side, Mr. Crabbe, sir. I suggest that we close in the middle of November. If we ran on to the end, Christmas would be too close. Inhabitants don't come out—they keep their money for the holidays—and gentry go away."

"Kate Lemon's a trump card," said Mr. Crabbe: "queen of trumps, eh, Andrews? She might bring us good houses till the end of November, perhaps."

"Only 'perhaps,' sir: only 'perhaps.' Yes, Lemon is a trump, and no mistake, and we have made a good use of her, and you may trust me I will continue to do so as long as the season lasts."

"Well, have your own way, and close in the middle of November. Make the best use of Kate Lemon till then, remember. But stay! Should we offer to take her for December and January at home, at double

the salary she is just beginning to get with us?"

"I doubt if she'd accept. She's as proud as a peacock, now, sir. Nevertheless, I'll mention it, as an instance of your generosity. I know they have been bidding for her at Manchester, three times the salary we are to give her here in November. We shall then be giving her twenty-five shillings a week. Manchester offers her four pounds."

This was true, for only that morning Kate had received a letter from a manager in the cotton capital, of which she had said not a word to any one. But the envelope had become ungummed, in passing through the post, or it had never been properly fastened; and Andrews, who had earliest access to the letters for members of the company—directed, of course, to the Rooms, in ignorance of their private addresses—had observed the circumstance. With Andrews, to observe a thing was to profit by it. He had read the letter, replaced it in the envelope, carefully gummed

the edge of the flap, and in due time had handed the spotless document to Kate, with the remark,—“ Ah, Miss Lemon! Very sad, very sad, indeed! A love letter, with the Manchester post-mark, Miss Lemon. These are sad pranks, sad pranks, sad pranks. Yet you are the young lady who can't spare an old bachelor like me a sweet word, Miss Lemon. Oh, fie, fie! miss.”

“ Give me my letter, please.”

He gave it her.

When rehearsal was over—and it was proceeding during the talk between Crabbe and his assistant—Kate went up to her friend Mr. Harper, and said at once,—“ Please read this note. You know something about it, I fancy, for Mrs. Harper says you are engaged at Manchester for the winter.”

“ So I am; and I wanted you to be, too. I told Mrs. Harper you would suit our manager there, and she advised me to write to him. Well, you see, I wrote, and he takes my word about you. That's what I consider an honourable

offer, such as Crabbe and Andrews never made."

"Oh, how very kind of you! I do thank you so. But how is it he did not want to see me first, before offering me four pounds a week, sir?"

"He took my word, I tell you," said the old man, with pleasure and pride. "You know I was a manager myself, for many years; though not in such a large place as Manchester. I was on what we actors used to call the York circuit. It is broken up now. I had losses, though, and was forced to give up management, and take to playing again myself. But there are men in the profession who think me a good judge, for all that."

"It is so kind of you," said Kate, thoroughly pleased. "May I come in and talk it over with Mrs. Harper when I've shown the letter to mother?"

An assent was given readily, and Kate walked home to dinner light of heart. Mrs. Hassell was glad to learn that there was a pros-

pect of Kate's making money ; but she was in difficulties about the domestic arrangements.

" You know, my dear, as 'Assell wants me back. And naturally, too ! What man would like to be left for months ? You couldn't lodge all by yourself at Manchester. It wouldn't be respectable, my dear."

" I could perhaps stay with Mr. and Mrs. Harper. That would do exactly, if it could be arranged ; and I think they like me. You know that anyhow we have to separate for a time, mother : 'twon't be for very long. Father, of course, can't be always sparing you, and I must be in the country for something like a year altogether, before coming out in Town. Mr. Bavit said so, you know."

This was a suggestion which Mrs. Hassell thought a good one, and in a day or two it was arranged that she should return to her husband and that Kate should, at the close of her Scarborough engagement, go home for a week or ten days ; rejoining the old actor and his wife at Manchester, just in time to take part in the

rehearsals which would precede her appearance in the great Lancashire city. Mrs. Hassell duly departed, to be a companion for her lord, but the whole of the plan was not to be fulfilled.

While Buckingham Crabbe remained in at least nominal charge of the theatrical enterprise at the Queen's Rooms, some amount of consideration, though not a great amount, was accorded to the players. He was not an indulgent man, but he was not habitually harsh. He often scrupled to take advantage of a member of his company, whom circumstances placed in his power—not because it was unfair to take advantage, but because it might 'prove unpleasant. He disliked to meet a discontented face, or to be received with a word of reproach. He was of the class which objects to the sufferings or ills of others only if it be forced to behold them.

This wide-spread and fashionable form of compassion was not shared by the old stage-manager now in supreme command. He never dreamed of showing consideration merely to

spare his feelings. He showed it only when his shrewdness told him that his material interests would thereby be advanced.

At the present moment, Mr. Andrews was naturally engrossed with the question—How best to bring the theatrical campaign to a successful close? Visitors were going away; the inhabitants of the town were ceasing to find novelty in the performances; and it became necessary that the managerial efforts should be redoubled. Generally in the course of the season, three new pieces had been produced in a week: that is to say, on every other evening one of the pieces played was new to the audience, and had necessitated rehearsals on the stage. The moment Mr. Andrews's rule began, there was something fresh in every evening's programme. Of course it did not always happen that Kate had a part in the latest production; but she was very hard worked. With the beginning of the last week, came the final "benefit" performances, crowding together. Kate, new to the stage, and unable at the moment of her

engagement to count upon a popular success, had not arranged for a "benefit." But in the extraordinary representations to which the stage-manager, using the names of other players, sought to attract the public, she had to take her share.

"It is spoiling me, Mr. Harper," she said to her old friend, in their quiet lodgings; and Mrs. Harper paused instantly, in making tea, and looked a sympathy which she could not express.

"Yes," said her husband. "It is all very well in its way, you know, Sarah, but Andrews is carrying the thing to excess. Here is Miss Lemon, pretty well tired of it. She has played a new part each evening for four nights in succession. They can only afford one rehearsal for each piece; so that, as she says, it spoils her for the profession—prevents her really improving herself. And think, Sarah, of the hours she must take for study."

"I learn pretty fast, thank goodness," said Kate; "but it *is* hard work, I confess. What

I mind most, is the bad acting I do. You see, I have no time to understand the parts thoroughly. I was up till four o'clock this morning—four hours after Mr. Harper and I came home from the Rooms—learning my part for to-night, and, though I know it by heart, I vow I don't understand it."

"That is what you pay for being thought clever and made a great deal of, my dear. Don't you wish yourself back at the shop?" said her protectress.

"Oh, not I!" answered Kate, quickly enough. "Every one says I'm getting on well; and we shall be better off at Manchester. Shan't we, Mr. Harper? Besides, in four days' time I'm going home for my holiday."

Kate rose to go upstairs and hastily dress.

"She don't seem herself to-night," said Mrs. Harper, to her spouse. "You be sure and look well after her. She has such a spirit that she would never really complain until she were dead beat."

"I'll see to her," answered the old comedian,

getting his great-coat on. "It's a close, muggy evening. I shall scarcely want this thick thing, shall I?"

"Better take it : the outside air strikes cold after the heat on the stage."

Kate was down again, and in a minute they departed ; walking quickly through the damp, close, ill-lighted streets to the place of their evening's work.

"*Players*, are we!" said the old man to Kate, as they went in at the door. "You've found out by this time, Miss Kate, that we are the hardest worked lot of people going, and that you've chosen a difficult art, which the public makes very light of."

They passed in : Kate to the ladies' dressing room, and Harper to the one on the other side of the stage. The call-boy summoned them at the proper moment : both appeared in the first act. At its end, they went into the green-room.

"You said you didn't understand it; yet you acted beautifully," said Kate's protector

in her ear. "I never saw more spirit put into the part, though I have seen more elaboration."

"I'm so glad. Thank you for saying so. I think I understand it better. . . . Oh, Mr. Harper, I'm going to ask a favour! Can you spare me half a glass out of your flask of sherry?"

"In an instant. Here. Take more. Are you sure the half is enough? You go on in the first scene of this act, and it's a difficult one. I'm obliged to go upstairs to change my dress while you are on, as you know."

The call-boy's voice. Kate stepped to "the wings" and behind the footlights. The music stopped; the dialogue began again. Mr. Harper hurried upstairs.

Kate was acting with wonderful *verve*, and the spectators, who were numerous that night, stimulated her by their hearty laughter and frequent applause. Suddenly those who were with her on the stage noticed an indistinctness in her utterance. Her face, which till that moment had been brimming over with ex-

pression, now had a look of vacancy. The spirit and enthusiasm with which she had begun one long sentence were in strange contrast with the weakness with which she had finished it. It was a useless effort. Pale and cold, Kate fell towards the floor, but was caught by the outstretched arm of an actor who was near her. He waved his other arm and gesticulated to the prompter at the side, and before they had removed her the curtain dropped.

CHAPTER IV.

WARNER started southwards the second week in December. "The sooner I leave Paris," he had thought, "the sooner I shall be back in England." He had written to Madeleine to say that he was about to move on, in the hope that he might see much and do much during an absence not too prolonged.

A week after his wife received this intelligence, Ringley also had a letter. It bore the Lyons' postmark, and contained, amidst much Art-talk, the following passages :—

* * * * *

" 'Why break the journey to the south in this big manufacturing town?' you may ask. I answer, It is more than a city of manufactures, or I certainly should not have stopped.

It has its modern and magnificent side, worthy to be a capital. Still, that is not what I stay for. I am here to see some pictures which, for practical purposes, are buried from the public—except, indeed, the public of Lyons—for who but a stray painter thinks of halting between Paris and the Mediterranean to see the church of Ainey, with Hippolyte Flandrin's frescoes?

“The pictures were done under unfavourable circumstances, in a bad light, and with other difficulties too. But a great man is greatest in difficulties, and Flandrin is great here. Strange!—he thought these three compositions of his would never be worth very much. Yet where has he done anything much better than the principal picture here?—*Christ Blessing the World*? It is a master's work: perfect in grouping, perfect in the gracious flow of its pure outline. It has enough movement to avoid stiffness, yet not enough to sacrifice repose, which is, perhaps, the supreme characteristic of Flandrin's work.

“Fancy!—this thing by a modern man bears

to be seen when one is fresh from the treasures of the Louvre. I do not mean to institute comparisons, for there is greatness and greatness; but is it not already much to say that instead of repelling or disgusting, it attracts and delights you? He did this thing at forty-six, in his full maturity. I have said that it delights, but in another sense it saddens me, as great work often does. To feel that while longing to do so much I have done so little, has often made me look at the highest Art with a feeling not far removed from bitterness. It is hard to turn from it to one's own work only to read the sentence, 'Thus far shalt thou go, and no farther.'

"But I begin to hope that I have not yet been quite to the end of my range. I commenced a picture in Paris, and shall continue it in the south. It may show, at all events, some advance. . . . Forgive this egotism."

* * * * *

Two nights were spent at Lyons, after which Warner journeyed on to Marseilles. It

was his first visit, and he was tempted to spend a few days in studying the faces, gestures, and costumes of the people of all nations who crowd into this Mediterranean port. The far East had its representatives. Algeria, Malta, Sicily lent variety to the stream of humanity which daily whirled or eddied along the great Cannebière.

Staying at Nice only one night, at the "Hôtel des Princes"—which, as he said to himself, "my new young widowed friend recommended me in Paris,"—he began the journey of the Cornice Road. "I go," he wrote to Madeleine, from the first halting-place beyond Nice, "to see this country at a glance, and then settle myself for a few weeks at some quiet place where one can work—bringing back to you, I hope, long before the Academy opens, my new picture."

True to the first part of his intention, our friend saw swiftly the Cornice Road, spent two days at Genoa, and then returned to Nice to fix upon some place of sojourn. At the *table-*

d'hôte, on the evening of his arrival, he espied his handsome acquaintance; but he was too far off to be able to speak to her, and he had every reason to believe that she did not notice him.

Warner was vexed that he was not placed by some pleasant person at table. He made civil overtures to his neighbours on both sides. On his right, was an English military man, who was obviously old, and who afterwards proved to be deaf. He answered Warner with a bare affirmative or negative. On the left, an American girl became violently friendly, not to say forward,—speaking with a twang so unfortunate, “guessing” and “calculating” to an extent so alarming to a lover of good English, that Warner eventually was fain to fall back upon the dishes and the wine, and to partake of these with critical discrimination.

Next day, he wandered about Nice; admiring its sea and sky, and gaining many a point of view which charmed him even after the beauties of the Cornice Road. But he

decided that he would not remain in a place so especially the haunt of idle loungers and butterflies of fashion. "These things distract me," he thought. "Why should I deliberately choose them? To-night will doubtless be my last in the 'Hôtel des Princes.'"

At dinner, he was again next to the deaf old soldier, but the young American had gone; or, at all events, she was not his neighbour. Despairing of his fellow-diners, he did not at first even glance at them; but the waiter had but just brought him his soup when he perceived a face not new to him.

"So you are actually staying here," said the Englishwoman from Paris, after he had returned her bow of recognition. She was seated next to him. "And when, pray, did you arrive?"

"Yesterday," answered Warner; "but I was also here a week ago for a single night. I had not then the pleasure of seeing you."

"Ah! Truly. I had not then arrived. It is only six days since my arrival. I must have left Paris a couple of days after you."

"Perhaps even more than that, since I made nearly a week's journey to this place, owing to stoppages at Lyons and Marseilles."

"And do you stay here long?" she asked, looking very bewitching. "Come now, is not Nice a trifle too frivolous for a man of your gravity and serious pursuits?"

He did not answer at once, and before he could begin to do so she continued,—

"I am sick already of the visiting and gossiping which go hand in hand in the haunts of society; and to tell you the truth, I have determined to take flight. I shall have fled by to-morrow at middle-day."

"Whither?" asked Warner; "if I may be allowed to inquire."

"Oh, not very far! Not even to Algeria for 'a winter with the swallows,' following the example of the last authoress of books of travel."

"It is a secret then?"

"Not the least bit in the world," she laughed. "I am merely going to the 'Hôtel

de l'Orient' at Hyères. You know it by name, no doubt—Hyères, on the coast of Var."

"By name only. And what are its attractions?" Warner demanded.

"Quietness, to begin with—a poor attraction for you men. A sea and sky as fine as these of Nice, and none of Nice's drawbacks. Nice is cosmopolitan; Hyères is content to be national. Not but that there are a few English there, you know; but one does not meet a motley throng of travellers from the uttermost parts of the earth."

"I would gladly enough see the place," the painter said.

"Have you been working much lately?" asked this lady.

"Very little, which is a lamentable circumstance for myself, and a happy thing for the public."

She was too clever to flatter him grossly, and to say, as silly women would have said, that the public could not do without his pictures.

"I am so fond of Art," she replied, "that

I wish I could answer your self-condemnation rather more adequately. But I am without the means. I know so little of your pictures, you see; and it might even happen that if I knew more I should agree with you to some extent in your estimate of them."

"And very rightly too," Warner rejoined. "In my pictures there is often perhaps scarcely more than the *endeavour* to paint."

"I should sympathise with that with my whole heart, for I hope I have myself a little of the artistic instinct—the aspiration towards what is beautiful—though, alas! nothing whatever of the artistic power. It is often so in the world: we who would do the most, do the least. But you will surely do great things some day, if you have not done them already."

"You will do them long before me," smiled Warner, struck with a dreamy look in her eyes, and pleased with the expression of a woman's interest in serious Art.

"Have you known our hostess in Paris long?" she asked, changing the subject.

"Scarcely at all; but she was very kind in asking me, and I was at several of her evenings."

"She is a charming person: all brightness and sunshine. And do you know very well the gentleman who introduced us?"

"I forget his very name. Pierson—a painter whose studio I shared during those few weeks—had but just introduced me to him. I wonder if you know Pierson?"

"No, not at all. Perhaps during my husband's life—when we used to be in Paris together—I may have met him many times, but I declare I have no recollection of it. As you don't know the man—he is a painter, by-the-by—who happened to introduce us to each other, I suppose, Mr. Warner, you know few of the frequenters of those Thursday evening receptions. Do you know Lady Feltham, I wonder?"

"No."

"Nor Mr. Greyling?"

"Greyling! No, certainly not. Was he there?"

"I think he came in, the evening I met you."

She was rather surprised at Warner's quick notice of the mention of the name, and said, an instant after her first answer,—“If you don't know him, you know something about him? I am rash enough to say so because you seemed interested when I asked you half a minute since.”

“I am always interested when a lady asks me anything,” said Paul. “Your rashness *is* rashness for once, for really I have not the very faintest idea who Greyling is.”

“That is because you have the very clearest, instead.”

“No, really. I am not quibbling at all. Upon my word I don't know how. I only wondered what you were going to tell me about him.”

“Well then, I will impart my information : being only sorry you should have fancied I was going to say anything worth hearing. Mr. Greyling is a Queen's messenger ; a bird of passage—strong on the wing, like this year's

grouse. He says he is very fond of travelling, and I am sure that under the circumstances he ought to be."

"Is he old?"

"No."

"Wise?"

"As Sir Andrew Aguecheek."

"A Queen's messenger's must be an arduous post," pursued Warner, anxious to learn more about the uncle of his wife, but naturally disliking to press perceptibly for information, upon one who was almost a stranger.

"Yes, very. But I suppose Mr. Greyling likes it."

"It is not a matter of necessity with him then?"

"Who knows? It may be. I really cannot tell you. You seem in want of an introduction to him."

"As you mentioned this gentleman, remember, I thought you would have something piquant to relate."

"Oh, no! I have no subsidy from M. Piétri,

in the Rue de Jérusalem. In these matters, if one is curious, you know, Mr. Warner, there is always Pollaky and his Private Inquiry Office to refer to. See! The people are going away, and I have things to prepare for my departure to-morrow. Good evening, Mr. Warner."

Both bowed, and the lady left the table first. When she reached her rooms she rang the bell, and requested the presence of the proprietress of the hotel. Landlord there was none: Madame Duval was the head of the house.

"I wanted to speak to you," said she, when the landlady entered. "Two words, for your own ear only. A man has been annoying and insulting me to-day."

"My faith! Where then has one insulted Madame?"

"Not in your house; so never mind, I beg you. He has been following me, and knows where I am lodging, but cannot know my name. That is a reason why I am obliged to go to-morrow. I might otherwise have stayed a day or two longer."

"What pity!" ejaculated Madame Duval. "Ah! it is the strangers, of whom some in Nice are bad subjects; very bad subjects, in effect."

"Never mind. I only wished to tell you that he might come here at any moment and ask to see me. Tell him nothing whatever. If he asks my name, you do not know it. I *must* be protected."

"Ah, Madame may have confidence in me! *Soyez-en sûre!*" Madame just then put a piece of paper, light and crisp, into the landlady's hand, under the cover of a friendly and grateful grasp.

"Ah, it is true! The English are *so* rich and *so* happy! Could I be useful to Madame in any way? No? There is nothing of which Madame has need? Ah! how I am desolated! Good evening, Madame."

She quickly turned to the door again, and the interview was over.

"*Mon Dieu!*" she said to herself, walking along the passage, "*cela ne m'étonne guère, puisque cette femme est si belle.*"

CHAPTER V.

WHEN Warner left the dinner-table he was sufficiently content. He had renewed his acquaintance with a very graceful woman, and this woman had told him a little—though, indeed, it was very little—about that relative of his wife's whose presence in the world and whose recent marriage had been made known to him by the announcement in *The Times*, but of whom he and Madeleine knew scarcely anything besides. The lady was pleasant society, on her own merits, and there was always the chance that in some subsequent conversation with her, Warner might hear more with respect to his wife's uncle. True, his informant had protested that she had told him all she knew; but it is easy, he reasoned to himself, to declare

in good faith, of a casual acquaintance, that you have told all you know about him, and yet with the lapse of time and the efforts of memory to recall little incidents, little facts which are numberless.

Why should he not go to Hyères? If it were quiet, if it were beautiful—and he was told that it was—this would surely be the place for a few weeks' steady work: work which should result in the completion of the picture begun in Paris. "One cannot," thought Warner, "always measure one's work by the time it takes. I gave six good weeks to the new thing in Paris; getting the figure well in. A month here, as well employed, should be enough to finish it."

To Hyères he went, a couple of days after he had first thought of it. He established himself at the "Hôtel de l'Orient;" engaging two rooms, the one for a bedroom, the other to serve the purpose of a studio. It was of course his first care that the temporary studio should be well situated, with a fair light. His

fascinating friend of Paris and of Nice had two rooms on the floor below. The first day, at the *table-d'hôte*, Warner did not see her till the dinner was over. Then they exchanged a few words and he regretted that they had not been placed together.

"A fortunate chance," she answered, "put you by me at Nice one night. I cannot count on a continuation of such good luck—for is it not good luck to sit by an intelligent person when travellers are such as we now see them?"

Had she thought fit, however, she could have perpetuated her good fortune, notwithstanding her declaration that it could not continue; for it was she who had bidden the servants at Nice to change her position. The draught from the doors had been a convenient plea, and, when the servants declared that guests were seated in a regular order which could not be altered, a small but timely gratuity had caused the plea to be accepted.

"I hope," said Warner, "that we are not

quite to lose sight of each other, because a dozen busy diners happen to be between us."

"Oh, no! I want you to point out what is wrong in a sketch I made at Nice."

"You do me an honour to turn me to any service," answered the painter, "and my criticism, however slight may be its value, shall be honestly given."

"Thank you," she said. "Then some day or other we will look at my sketch and pick it to pieces."

Having said this, and seen that Warner was glad of the prospect of further association, she turned away, and for the next few days studiously avoided the artist. He saw nothing whatever of her during the long mornings, and in the evenings she did not appear to notice him from her distant seat at the dinner-table.

He was disappointed at her apparent indifference; for her conversation had pleased him—more for what she had suggested than for what she had uttered—and her beauty made her a pleasant object for the eye to fall

upon. It was beauty of line rather than of expression; the face scarcely claiming that pre-eminence over the figure which characterises not only many modern pictures, but also the natural types which prompt and inspire them. Instead of great freshness there was great ripeness ; instead of piquancy, a dreamy languor, sometimes laid aside ; instead of agility, fulness of outline. In a word, it was not the beauty of nineteen : it was the beauty of nine-and-twenty.

“ She is well placed,” thought Warner, “ in the midst of this landscape, with these glowing heats even in winter, and under this warm southern sky. I declare that if she looked well in Paris, she looks better here. She is in utter harmony with this southern nature. . . . What in the world can I have done to offend her ? ”

The following morning, she met Warner in the hall of the hotel. He always took his walk at a given hour, and that hour she had discovered. Meeting him, of course she stopped and bowed.

"You never corrected my sketch," she said at once. "Unfaithful person! You soon got tired of talking to me."

"*I?* I should only be too happy," stammered Warner. "I declare I was most unwillingly prevented from seeing anything of you."

"Oh, you should have called at my rooms! I hardly liked to ask you, you know; but that does not alter my pleasure in receiving a visitor, if he cares to come. Ask for Mrs. Burton's drawing-room: number sixty-two."

"To-morrow," Warner answered, "I shall certainly have the pleasure."

"You are not looking very well, Mr. Warner. I fear you work too hard. Do take care of yourself. It is wretched to be laid by in an hotel."

CHAPTER VI.

*"Hôtel de l'Orient, Hyères, Var.
10th January, 1869.*

"DEAR MADELEINE,—

"I WROTE a few lines, about a fortnight since, to tell you of my arrival here, and have since then to thank you for a very kind note, by which I am delighted to know that you are quite well, and glad to learn that you see no reason for my hurrying back until the new picture is finished. This is kind of you.

"What a superb country! You may like to hear a little about it, though words seem weak in sight of a nature so splendid and luxuriant.

"This house, to begin with, is on a slight elevation. It is white and square, with dark

green blinds outside all windows. One tall cypress-tree stands on my left hand as I look to the Mediterranean. The sea is two miles away, and these two miles are miles of plain. To east and west the plain stretches along the coast, and towards the east it extends further than I can see. Low walls divide it here and there, and it is crossed by one long road that is very visible, and by others that are not. The flat and open country is strewn with olives—green and silver grey. No foliage has such variety of tint; and the weird trunks and twisted branches make many and many a picture.

“On the right hand, westward, the line of plain soon ends, for there rises from it a rounded hill—the Hermitage: so called from the building at its top. Under this hill, the olives cluster more closely. Here and there over the landscape, as I look towards the Mediterranean, are white villas, square, like this where I am, and surrounded often by evergreens of more kinds than one: generally there are two or three black cypresses, some-

times a row of them, pointing straight to the sky—they are the grave and admonishing fingers of this marvellous earth. The sea is a gold sheet or a violet sheet or a grey furrowed field, according to the hour and the weather. Beyond it, in the furthest front of us—or remotest background—lie the isles of Hyères : an undulation of low land in the distance and the mist.

“Over this perfect landscape of gentle outline and harmonious colour, place in your imagination, as you sit in London, the clear warm sky of the south, and you have then the picture which my window frames for me.

“There comes at this moment, through that open window, a light breath of air, not strong enough to stir the leaves of the cypress in the garden. A peasant woman is trudging along the white roadside, and will pass soon and cross herself before the high crucifix of wood which rises from a little grass mound further on. But she is not near enough for me to hear her, even in this stillness, and except now and again, as I have said, the very faintest rustle of

a warm breeze from the sea, there is no sound at all.

“I must finish here, and go back to my work.

“Your affectionate husband,

“PAUL WARNER.”

“Not a word of love for me!” sighed Madeleine, as she laid aside the letter on the mantelpiece and sat down to her lonely breakfast in the Craven Hill dining-room. “No : not *one* little word !”

Not much breakfast was eaten that morning. Madeleine would willingly have rung the bell, and ordered its removal ; but had she done so, or had she left the food untasted, while allowing the things to remain, the servants must have surmised that the post had brought bad news, and the mistress of the house would have been the subject of a gossip in the kitchen. Perhaps indeed the cook might have communicated her suspicions to neighbouring handmaids, in the course of confidential interviews by the area

railings. So Madeleine sat down quietly to breakfast; poured with a trembling hand a cup of coffee; tasted it, and cut some bread. Her lips and tongue were dry with excitement: the food would have choked her. It was an impossible meal.

She rang the bell, and told the page—the only male servant—to clear the table; adding that she had a headache that morning.

When he reached the kitchen, where cook and housemaid were reading the morning paper, the page announced: “Missus has a headache. Breakfast things have come down nearly as I took them up.”

“Ah,” exclaimed the housemaid, “that’s because of Mr. Warner’s letter, which came this morning! His letters never do her any good, that I know of.”

On the excuse of bringing down a lamp to clean, this servant went upstairs, and had an opportunity of looking at Madeleine’s face.

“She’s been crying,” remarked the young woman on her return. “I can tell by the dark

lines under her eyes. Well, I'm sorry for her. It does seem queer that a lady's husband should stay away so long."

"She never says a word of it," said the cook. "Who's to know what's in her mind, after all? We've not much to complain of in our places here; but as for what's in Mrs. Warner's mind, I wouldn't undertake to answer for it. What precious long walks she goes every morning!"

It was easy to impute to Madeleine other feelings than those of regret for her husband's absence; and to a vulgar-minded person, given to double-dealing, it was hard to believe her simple. But the servant's distrust would have been shared by most, for there are only two classes of people who understand and recognise simplicity, and never doubt it. The first consists of those who are themselves simple and unsophisticated; the second, of those whose dramatic sympathy enables them to comprehend all moods, like and unlike their own. Of these classes, neither is large. The one is

represented by such heroines of romance as Ophelia, Gretchen, and Pompilia; the other, by the poets who created them.

Madeleine drew a small writing-table to the window, that she might see the better on that foggy morning, took up her pen, and with much thought between the lines and words, wrote at last to her husband.

“ I received your letter this morning, my dearest Paul, but it seems so strange to me. I do not want to receive others like it—I would rather not hear. It is all, *all* description of scenery, which of course is very pretty, because you wrote it; but I should so much rather hear what you do with yourself all day long. Will you soon have finished your picture? I cannot easily imagine what you do, nor how the time passes. Perhaps if I had been abroad myself, this would be easier to understand; but it seems to me that you must live just exactly as if you had never known me, and I long for you to think of me often while you are away.

“ Perhaps, you meet clever people, Paul, who talk to you, and please you. I hope you do, with all my heart, for I should be a very bad wife if I wished you to be dull and to feel lonely. Only you will not forget that I am the one person who cares for you devotedly, and that no one else in all the world can ever care for you in this way.

“ You don’t ask how I am getting on here ; but I do believe you will wish me to tell you. I *dare* not believe the contrary. I work and read and play, and take long walks in Kensington Gardens, and I try to keep the house in good order, that you may say it looks well when you come back.

“ But I have not much to do, and have often to make occupations for myself. I hope you are busier, and very happy. Perhaps I was wrong, dear Paul, to feel vexed with your letter. At all events, forgive me. My husband, may God bless you !

“ Your devoted

“ MADELEINE.”

CHAPTER VII.

THE day after that on which Mrs. Burton had asked Warner to call on her in her private rooms, he duly presented himself at the entrance to her apartments.

"Come in," said Mrs. Burton, opening the door in answer to his knock. "I am my own servant, you see. I have not even a maid. I dismissed my last at Nice, for pilfering, and, for the present, I have to put up with the inconvenience of being without one."

From the disposition of the room it was to be surmised that its occupant had decided to remain in it for some time; probably until the winter's end, thought Warner, as he looked round. The furniture was of the sort common in French inns of the better class—neither new

nor elegant, but with a certain rough good taste and largeness of design well suited to the lofty chambers, and to the style of the house. There seemed no incongruity. The whole might have been superseded by something richer and more modern, and this would have pleased many persons; but at all events there was nothing to offend the eye—no one article to court attention more than the rest. There was not a sign of that attempt to unite luxury with cheapness, grandeur with the pettiness of mechanical finish, which disfigures the middle-class houses of England—relieved only by the evidences of domestic life—and which culminates in the hopeless and desolate vulgarity of the family and commercial hotel.

Strewn about the room, were proofs of a woman's presence: a small work-basket with embroidery, on a table, scissors and a needle-case close by, a Russian leather note-case, a gilt inkstand, a carved ivory penholder, and a delicate little box for vestas. Two or three shelves had been recently fixed against the

walls, and there stood on them the books most frequently displayed by "superior women." Here were the volumes of Shakespeare, Shelley, Byron; here, those of Tennyson, Ruskin, and John Stuart Mill; there, the *Causeries du Lundi*, the Poems of Schiller, and Germany's great philosophic drama—it is not necessary for superior women to understand everything which they must read. A few photographs, chiefly from pictures by Boulanger and Zuber-Bühler, hung on the walls; and a couple of water-colour sketches—one of them from a point of view near Nice, one from the windows of that very apartment at Hyères—were visible on a side-table.

Warner having seated himself, the better to look at the drawings, Mrs. Burton crossed the room and stood by the open window, as if entranced by the spectacle which the outer world presented at that moment. When the visitor had glanced at her sketches in silence for a minute or two, he looked up, before speaking, and saw that the graceful

figure and classic head were turned away from him.

"What an admirable background!" he exclaimed involuntarily; the artist's love of beauty permitting him, perhaps, to imply a thing which most men would have restrained, for as he made mention of a background some foreground must obviously have been in his thoughts.

"Don't praise my sketches too violently. Even flattery should be laid on in delicate colours, you know," said Mrs. Burton, turning.

"It was not your sketches," murmured Warner, "I was only thinking that the window frame enclosed a picture: the subject, what one would choose for a fancy portrait; the background, a landscape as fine as that of Titian's native mountains, though quite a different one."

She gave what Warner thought a stately, magnificent smile: stepped back towards him from the window, looking neither surprised nor pleased nor angry at his praise.

"Some gold heads are the better for that

background of Titian's—the solemn shadow of blue mountains. But a dark head wants different relief.”

She turned again towards the warmly-lighted landscape. It was a January afternoon, near sunset : very still and beautiful. Either she was really engrossed with its luxurious charm, or she wished to appear so, in order that he should not see her face.

“ Don't move from the window,” said the painter. “ I will look at your sketches undisturbed, if you please ; preserving whatever critical faculties I may possess.”

Again he glanced at the two drawings. Mrs. Burton was perfectly still. Then he lifted his head and looked at her once more.

While he was looking, her position changed slightly. On paper, sketches of the two attitudes would have seemed like two studies for a picture of one figure, towards which the artist was feeling his way by lines of grace becoming yet more graceful.

Warner was fascinated. The pale Greek

head, with its lustrous black hair, and the fine clear features—scarcely marred by the touch of superciliousness, the touch of coldness, in the curved lips—were seen in that vanishing profile, that *profil perdu*, which attracts by its suggestiveness. It is a view of head and features which a great Frenchman has turned to good account in a portrait whose quiet restfulness is even for *his* work remarkable, and which the most Greek of living English painters has adopted in a garden figure hardly equalled in its freshness of simplicity. Mrs. Burton's womanhood was certainly more mature, if also more magnificent, than that of the models who served the need of these two artists. The tightly-fitting dress, which closed over full arms and falling shoulders, drooped to the ground in lines like those of studied drapery.

Suddenly the hostess looked round on the painter, and moving from the window, approached him like one who was conscious of her own power of enchantment and who was

alert to use it when she willed. Like the Venus of Shakespeare's poem, her eyes were

Grey, and bright, and quick in turning.

"She is immensely beautiful," thought Warner; "and she is one of those women whom self-consciousness does not spoil; their very pride in their own beauty being an element in its attractiveness. But what is that to me?"

He asked himself a natural question, yet one not easy to answer. Madeleine was certainly not less lovely, and hers was a loveliness with which Warner had at all events temporarily dispensed, because it was unaccompanied by the intellectual gifts which help an artist's labour, and in creating thought create activity. Beauty for its own sake was not what he wanted: at least, so he had himself imagined. Yet here, before this woman, he was all but falling a prey to its seductiveness, and was not quite sure whether intellectual gifts were really those which had wrought the charm.

"'D. B.'" read Warner, in the corner of

the drawings. "What does 'D. B.' mean?" he asked, aloud.

"'D. B.' means 'Dolores Burton : ' nothing else. How do you find my sketches?" asked the lady, looking at him across the little table.

Warner hesitated.

"I shall not declare of your criticism," she continued, "what poor M. de Lamartine averred of all criticism—that it is only the power of the powerless."

"I fear that is true in my case. What is my opinion of the sketches worth, since I am not a landscape painter!"

"Say it."

"Well then, they ought to be better. Here, for instance, the outline is too hard : these hills could be made distinct without being hard. I am not for slurring outlines; nothing of the sort, indeed! Form is everything. The very smoke has a form. But it has softness too. So have these hills, in the real landscape."

"Thank you. Tell me my faults frankly."

"May I not allow myself the pleasure of

praising? I should like to praise every touch."

There was a minute's silence: the man's head was bent over the drawings; the woman's, turned aside, with downcast eyes, and a set face like that of the Sphinx.

"Here, for instance," he continued in a low tone, with trembling in his voice, "is much to praise heartily. This bit of colour is accurate. It must have been cleverly and carefully observed. Here the painting is very good: nothing smeared nor slurred: not a trace of indecision. One sees, I imagine, something of your character in your mode of work."

She was close to him now, and looking over the drawing which he held in his two hands.

"Thank you again: for criticism, not for flattery. I *long* to draw well!"

She knelt down on the floor, with her head and shoulders just above the table, and examined the sketch minutely, or appeared to do so. Then, looking up for a moment, her eyes met Warner's.

"I could sit at your feet and learn," she said, slowly and softly, and with the air of a confession.

"Oh!" replied Warner, rising from his chair and speaking with an effort to be merely trifling—as if he understood her remark to refer only to the art he practised, the art she was essaying. "You would get small return for your pains. I should prove a most unprofitable Gamaliel."

She smiled at the answer, and still bending over the drawings, rejoined in such a way as half to persuade him that the interpretation he had appeared to give to her previous words was indeed the correct one.

"I'll answer for it, Mr. Warner," she said, with low laughter, "that in your heart you think very well of your creative power, however much you may choose to disparage your critical."

Then she rose.

"Now look at the sunset," she continued, rushing to the window, with uplifted elbows, and laying both hands over her eyes to

screen them from the radiant light. "Mr. Warner, you paint well, and may paint better; but you will never match this picture!"

"Nor this!" thought Warner, making no answer in words, but looking at her face and figure in the waning sunset glow.

Sometimes from a mind acutely sensitive to external impressions—half Pagan in its worship of beauty that is visible—the idea of good and evil, of right and wrong, fades momentarily away. There is no Past, no Future. Beauty is everything. And the perfection of form—*that* is virtue.

But Warner had perhaps scarcely reached this state of feeling. Not many moments before, he had behaved in a way to restrain the tendency of Mrs. Burton towards submissive friendship and devotion—if indeed, as he thought afterwards, when reflecting on her speedy change of manner, that tendency existed at all.

"I must go," he said. "You will pardon me for having stayed so long."

She took his hand shyly, to say good-bye, and drooped her eyes with more than the modesty of a convent school-girl. Standing by the table, while he opened the door and left her, she never lifted those eyes until the door had shut, and then raised them suddenly, and strode to the window.

"Fool!" she said, in an audible whisper; clenching her right hand till the nails indented the palm. "Yes: I am a *fool*!" She did not utter her succeeding thoughts, which were, that she had touched in haste some unripe fruit, that it had all but fallen from her fingers—through rough usage—but that it would ripen yet, in spite of the too early test and the too early grasp.

"Yes," she said again, throwing behind her her clenched hands. "He half repelled me to-day. But before I have done with him, he shall love me. He shall love me to despair!"

CHAPTER VIII.

THOUGH Warner was making considerable progress with his picture, he began to wonder whether he had done wisely in fixing upon Hyères as the place of his temporary sojourn ; whether indeed he would not have done better if he had returned to London straight from Paris, when flushed with new thoughts and refreshed for a continuance of work. To say the least, was it not a mistake to exhaust the forces he had recruited before giving himself the opportunity of drawing upon them where they were most required by him ?—at home.

What was it, he asked himself in vain, that made Mrs. Burton so undeniable an attraction ? Was it intellect, or beauty, or a less explicable social charm—the subtle influence of

All that women add to men ?

These were questions to which the painter would have been puzzled to reply : questions perhaps upon which not even with himself could he afford to be quite frank. On the whole he was not discontented in seeing day by day some advance in his work, and in attributing it to the fact of congenial companionship—to the presence of a woman who understood his aims. One who by reason of his irresistible impulse, not less than of his faculty, was so completely an artist, had only to conceive the idea that the influence of a certain companionship was good for his work, to become grateful for it to the person by whom that influence was exercised. Many a personal benefit Warner would have forgotten ; many a one—and those especially which Madeleine could confer—he would not truly have appreciated ; but anything that he considered a service to his work was sure of evoking his gratitude. He was quite liable to be mistaken ; such service as he imagined may never have been rendered at all ; but from the moment

that he believed in it, the recognition was ample, the regard was great.

Two days after the visit to Mrs. Burton—paid on the plea of looking at her sketches—that lady watched Warner start for his usual walk an hour or so after noon. He had the day before received the letter from Madeleine which we have already had the opportunity of reading, and bits of it rose to his mind at intervals during his solitary walk across the plain.

“Poor Madeleine!” thought her husband. “She really ought to be here; for her love of scenery is a genuine love, and it is almost the only thing we have in common. She is out of sorts with me, it is true. Her note shows that; for what was mine to her if it was not very kind and considerate? I thought she would like a description of the place, so I did my best to give it her. Yes, she is out of sorts with me; but she really loves me—poor little girl!—and I will not let her suffer because of incompatibility of temperament. No, no: I will

make haste with my picture : it should be finished in a week. I will forget this marvellous woman, if common gratitude will allow me, and I will go back to little Madeleine."

So he walked on, forming good resolutions as he went, with something of the self-satisfaction which possessed the hero of a recent fiction when having made an elaborate calculation and classification of his debts—filing and docketting his bills with business-like order and precision—he considered that unusual effort as almost equivalent to paying them.

"Two o'clock!" said Warner to himself, looking at his watch, when he had reached the point from which he had decided to return. "Now I go back, get in between three and four, and some time during the evening I can write a note to Maddy, to cheer her up a little, with the prospect of my speedy arrival."

He retraced his steps. Occupied with thoughts suggested by the beauty of the scene, the time passed swiftly, and he found himself only a quarter-of-an-hour's distance from the

hotel before he seemed to have returned half way. Walking with his mind full and meditative, and with his eyes bent on the road but a few feet in advance of him, he was neither in a mood nor a position to take early notice of any one who might pass by. No one had passed as yet: no one had met him; and over the wide plain, as he trudged along the road that crossed it, there reigned the silence of a southern day, most silent at the golden beginning of the day's decline. The surrounding presences of Nature were felt rather than heard or actively noticed. He knew them all. There were olive-grounds beside him, untended and solitary. Behind him there was a shipless sea, tranquil and wide. Above, the glorious, unmoved canopy of sky, lofty and clear and blue, looked down on a luxuriant passive country, fertile without exertion, opulent without toil.

It was a land, thought Warner, for the mild-eyed lotus-eaters—

What pleasure can we have
To war with evil? Is there any peace

In ever climbing up the climbing wave?
All things have rest, and ripen towards the grave
In silence ; ripen, fall, and cease :
Give us long rest or death, dark death, or dreamful ease.

He repeated the words to himself in the lowest of whispers, and finishing, heard a foot-step in front, looked straight ahead, and saw that it was Mrs. Burton's, and that she was now on the point of meeting him.

"Walking out alone, and on these roads not much frequented?" asked Paul Warner, waking from his reverie.

"They are safe by reason of their solitariness, I imagine, Mr. Warner ; unless, indeed, you should prove to be a very dangerous character. Do not accompany me. Go away, I entreat you !"

She laughed at her own words, but her words were weighed. After they had been said, it was hardly possible for Warner, even had he wished it very strongly, to pursue his own way homewards. He thought of his letter to Madeleine ; but that was no serious impediment to his turning back with Mrs. Burton.

There would be time enough to write it in the evening.

"I have taken no long walks : I have been half afraid to do so without a maid ; and her arrival is unaccountably delayed. I fear she must be ill—the one I have now engaged. But really, Mr. Warner, I could not stay here for ever, contenting myself with little strolls round the house ; just on parade, so to speak. So here I am, setting out on a forced march. I mean to go to the Hermitage."

"I cannot possibly allow you to go alone," answered Warner. "I do not offer my escort, Mrs. Burton : I insist on its acceptance."

"Very well," said that lady. "The conditions of the march are not hard ; and you yourself, if you don't know it, will not repent having come to see the view. If you do know it, you will find that like all scenery it has beauties which are only gradually disclosed."

Now, as was said before, Mrs. Burton had seen Warner start from the hotel. With the aid of a good race-glass she had traced his course

for a considerable distance, and, having once satisfied herself that he was upon a road from which he was not likely to turn aside, she had hastily dressed in the loose kind of toilette that suits the country, and had walked in the same direction. It was a part of Mrs. Burton's plan that Warner should meet her before she had gone very far, and that he should be obliged to offer to accompany her.

Pleased with what thus far seemed the success of her scheme, Mrs. Burton walked along in good spirits, and talked very briskly to the painter on books that are amusing, subjects that are recreative. She was undoubtedly a person who understood masculine character better than do most women—who knew the needs of men, and could minister to their ease. She had abilities which could have enabled her to make one man happy: she used them to make many wretched.

Warner was soon lifted out of gloom; and, in its turn, brightness was followed by senti-

ment. From Molière and Dickens, the conversation shifted to Goethe and De Musset. They spoke of Werther and his cherished griefs ; of Rolla and his fruitless loves. Then the talk became personal.

They reached the top of the hill which is called the Hermitage—a hill which takes its name from the erection near its summit—and here was found a seat, commanding a prospect wide and delightful. The hour was between four and five. It was not cold, nor even breezy. A soft air fanned their faces, as, tired with the climb, Mrs. Burton took Paul Warner's arm in advancing from the seat to stand elsewhere, so as to change, to some extent, the view. The warmth of middle day, in sky, on land, and on the calm expanse of southern sea, had given place to the mellower tenderer warmth of early evening, when purples and deep greys steal across the landscape, when outlines are lost in a melodious whole, when a single object is nothing—all objects blending to one common harmony.

"It is perfect!" Warner said : then stopped for a minute. "I have seen it before, and more than once. It was never so perfect."

"Shall I tell you why?" whispered his companion, softly and slowly, and with a face which had it blushed could not have looked to Warner more enchanting.

"Say," murmured Warner, too overborne to shrink from any answer.

"You are happy."

They walked back, not rapidly, and at half-past six or seven—in the full darkness—reached the hotel. In gaining it, after leaving the road, there was no sound but that of their own footsteps on the smooth gravel path. Closed window-shutters and closed doors made the house look sombre. Outside it, there was no lamplight, and the two almost groped their way up the little terrace steps, near which the single cypress — a shadow, darker than the rest—pointed to the distant sky of sparsely scattered stars.

The house door, though closed, needed no

key. Warner had but to turn the handle, and they entered.

The hours went on : that day was over ; and others followed it in which Warner wildly fancied that he *lived*. There was the hovering and fluttering, as of the moth around the flame ; the situation whose very peril was a strange and fascinating pleasure ; and then the time when uncertainty had vanished, and all seemed lost, and between himself and Madeleine there was raised the barrier of his infidelity.

CHAPTER IX.

CHARLEY HASSELL heard in London, before the middle of November, of the illness of Kate. He had been in the habit of going frequently to the High Street of Notting Hill, to learn the latest report of her professional progress. Mrs. Hassell had brought excellent accounts not long before the accident, and Charley had congratulated himself on the successful result of his advice and exertions. He had been told of Kate's misfortune just forty-eight hours after it had occurred. Harper had proposed to telegraph to the Hassells, but his wife, who seemed to belong to an earlier epoch, connected the idea of a telegram with that of a most dire calamity, and she had persuaded her

husband not to alarm Kate's mother by such a proceeding. The following morning she wrote a note, saying that Kate was upset with over-work, that she had fainted on the stage the previous evening, that she had been taken home at once, had slept well, and was now pronounced by the doctor to be progressing favourably. She added that the presence of Mrs. Hassell was quite unnecessary : she had herself little to do, in those Scarborough lodgings, but to nurse Kate Lemon as long as was wanted. Furthermore, the time would be short.

But Mrs. Hassell's motherly anxieties were aroused. She was restless, and inclined to travel north. During the day after the receipt of bad news Hassell essayed to restrain her.

"Mind you," he declared, "I don't say you aren't to go ; but what I mean ter say is, there's no sort of need to. You've been away a long while, and I 'av' been much of a widower all this long while. Don't go travellin' about again, unless the girl is in danger."

"P'r'aps she is, 'Assell," sobbed his spouse.

"No, no : don't take on so foolish. This woman—the player's wife, I mean,—is a respectable person, no doubt; and don't she declare to you that Kate's doing very well? You can believe what you like, but *I* believe she speaks the truth. If she don't, be hanged to her! I'm as fond of Kate as you are, and couldn't be sorrier if she was my own flesh and blood; but don't you get fidgety when there's no sort of reason."

The argument was successful for the moment; but when Charley came in the evening, the good mother renewed her plea.

"No, aunt," Charley said. He called her "aunt" in sympathetic moments, though she was but his aunt by marriage. "No, no, there's really no need of it, and I think uncle quite right. He doesn't want you to go away again so long as Kate is in good hands, and I'm very glad to believe that she is thoroughly well-cared for."

But though Charley meant all he said, really

thinking that Mrs. Hassell's presence with her daughter was not in the least necessary, he was himself anxious to have further and fuller news. To this end he determined to write a line to the doctor—enclosing it in an envelope to Mr. Harper, and begging the old actor to cause it to be delivered at the earliest possible moment.

The note was written and sent, and three days afterwards there came an answer. Meanwhile the Hassells had not received a line from Kate, and were somewhat inclined to lose confidence. Mrs. Hassell had not yet started for the north, but Mr. Hassell had ceased to blame her when she spoke of doing so.

The doctor's account, a few civil lines to Charley, was neither very disheartening nor very reassuring. "*Close mental work,*" he said, "*has temporarily exhausted my fair patient's physical strength.*" This was no news: it was already obvious. "*Two or three weeks' rest,*" he continued, "*will, without doubt, restore that which is wanting—especially, if her friends decide for her to remain in this favoured spot,*

from which, indeed, she could hardly be removed just now."

"Fishing for practice," thought Charley. "But let me see : here is a postscript I have not read."

"You will clearly understand that Miss Lemon's condition inspires me with no anxiety."

In an earlier part of the note there was some technical phraseology, and there were several Latin words, very easy to translate, but not appearing to the unprofessional mind to be more forcible than their English equivalents. The writer was an old country practitioner, rather flattered by the receipt of a letter from London, praying for confidential information. The Harpers had told him that his correspondent was "in the law," and he had come to conclusions of his own as to the connection existing between Kate and this gentleman, who wrote from Lincoln's Inn.

Charley thought it right to take the letter to Notting Hill, and to show it to his friends there. Old Mr. Hassell was struck with its learning,

and Mrs. Hassell with its absence of definite information.

"You may be sure," she said, "that poor Kate's very bad; and as for you, Charley, I wonder you aren't ashamed to show your face here. You know as well as I do that she never would 'ave taken to this killin' work if you 'ad not talked her into it. I say, drat those private theatricals, and drat all those as takes part in 'em, 'Assell."

The good woman, whose command of grammar lessened as her warmth of feeling increased, vainly appealed to her husband to support her in her attack on Charley. Hassell's opinion of his nephew's ability was too profoundly fixed to be easily shaken.

"All 'ull come right. Don't you be impatient nor fidgety," he observed.

Charley was more sympathetic.

"Well, aunt, if any harm comes of it I'm heartily sorry for it. This isn't by any means the first time it has occurred to me that it might have been better to leave Kate happy

with the shop and the sewing-machine. But I shall hope for the best, remember. If any worse account should come of Kate, of course you will go to her."

Next morning was Saturday. Charley was at chambers betimes, working diligently until Mr. Merton should arrive. That gentleman's practice had increased of late ; owing to his having in the previous Term more than once persuaded the Vice-Chancellor of the justice of his client's case. The Vice-Chancellor in whose court he chiefly pleaded was a difficult man to persuade against his will, and on the accomplishment of this feat Mr. Merton had been congratulated by several of his learned brethren, and especially by Mr. Burley, Q.C., who could afford to be appreciative of rising merit, as he was himself awaiting promotion from the bar to the bench.

At ten o'clock, Merton arrived, accompanied by a short, middle-aged man, with black hair and keen observant eyes. Young Hassell did not know this person. It was Ringley, of the

Morning Press. The two passed into the barrister's inner room, but Merton left the door ajar, and Charley was sure to hear the conversation. With Charley the barrister was very confidential : he was not in the habit of looking closely to see if doors were shut. Young Hassell tried to get on with his work, but could not. There was a question he was anxious to ask Merton, and it burdened him.

"Here's the newspaper you wanted," said Merton, putting his hand on a journal, and giving it to his companion.

"Thanks. You've pretty well given up writing for us," said Ringley. "More work here, I suppose, and better pay?"

"More work ; yes. I suppose it's coming at last : remember I've been waiting for it eleven years. As for the better pay, I've not much to be thankful for, yet ; but certainly it is an improvement on the tender mercies of the commercial manager of the *Morning Press*. Recollect, I only got for my articles half what you get for yours."

"Fair enough, my dear fellow," said Ringley. "I wouldn't have it otherwise. A *littérateur* *should* get more for literary work than a barrister, who in letters is after all an amateur. You have your profession; I have mine. Let me have the fruits of mine, then, and do you confine your ambition to a good practice, and sooner or later, a seat on the bench."

"By-the-bye," said Merton—who was glancing at *The Times*, while talking and hearing the talk of his friend—"who do you think has got the Vice-Chancellorship?"

"Burley, I suppose. Common opinion selected him for the post."

("Confound the man!" thought Charley: "I wish he would go.")

"Right. He has got it. Give him joy of it."

"Good-bye," said Ringley. "See you at the club this evening." And so speaking he took up his cane and passed out.

Charley Hassell, thinking it well to ask the question before the barrister settled down to

work, walked into the inner room, and asked to be allowed to speak to him for half a minute.

"Certainly," answered Merton, looking up from the paper.

"A very great friend of mine is ill in the country. May I be spared to go down there, sir; from this morning, at eleven, until Monday morning?"

"Frightfully awkward."

"I'm afraid it is, and am sorry. I only ask because I *very* much want to go."

"Very well. I'll manage without you. Don't think yourself too important; and keep your spirits up, Hassell, I say, wherever you go, or you'll do no good to your friend."

"Thank you, sir," said Charley, brightening up. It was only the fear of a refusal that had made him look dull.

He walked to King's Cross, with his black leather bag in his hand, got his ticket, and rushed into a carriage as the fast train was about to start. At six o'clock he was at Scarborough,

enquiring for the terrace where the Harpers lodged. He did not take up his quarters at any inn, to begin with ; nor did he wait to get dinner, either in the town or at the station. One question pressed upon his mind, and it had speedily to be answered—How was Kate ?

CHAPTER X.

MR. and Mrs. Harper received their visitor with cordiality. Kate was better, Mrs. Harper said, and would be downstairs in a few minutes. She had been down for the first time on the previous evening, having been for a whole week confined to her room.

“What is to be done with her?” asked the old actor, of Charley. “We got a note this afternoon from her mother, asking us to let her know when we mean to leave Scarborough, so that Miss Lemon—or Kate, as I now make free to call her—may go to town for her holiday.”

“When do you leave?” asked Charley.

“On Wednesday. The following Monday morning—nine days from now—we open in

Manchester ; or rather I do : my wife does not act. The company here has mostly cleared out, Mr. Hassell ; and I am glad to say that owing perhaps to the representations I made to it the 'management' has behaved to Kate better than I expected. Andrews wanted to persuade me that Miss Lemon was liable to a fine for not acting the last two or three nights of the season."

" Ah ! " exclaimed Charley. " It was 'breaking the engagement,' was it ? "

" Technically, I suppose it was. Andrews said so."

" And Crabbe overruled the decision, did he ? Well done, for him, if he did ! "

" Yes, he did. Kate had a note from him this morning," broke in Mrs. Harper. " He says he will not enforce any fine ; so Kate is now well rid of the Queen's Rooms and its affairs."

" But what is she to do ? " resumed the kind woman's husband. " She won't be fit to appear at Manchester on Monday week, and will certainly have to give notice of it in

a day or two. But here she comes. That's her step, I expect. She will tell you more of it herself, sir."

At this moment Mr. and Mrs. Harper became suddenly aware of the necessity to quit the apartment—they were full of good nature and foresight—and Kate entered, an instant afterwards, to find Charley alone.

Instead of giving her the usual hand-shake Charley stepped forward and kissed her heartily. It was done in all simplicity, because it seemed the natural thing to do. Kate blushed a little—but not till after she had returned it—and then made Charley sit down, saying that he must be tired with his journey.

"Oh, Charley," she began, when she had seated herself on the old horsehair-covered sofa, "it's very kind of you to come down to see me! Thank you, with all my heart. I feel better already. But promise not to bore me by talking much about my being ill. I'm half ashamed of myself, to tell the truth; but I'm really much better now."

"You've nothing to be ashamed of, Kate. You were disgracefully overworked."

"Oh, but I thought I had more pluck! However, pluck won't carry one through everything."

"Are you fit to go home now? What does the doctor think?"

"I couldn't have gone to-day, for instance. The doctor says I may be able to go next week, but not so early as Wednesday, when the Harpers must be off to Manchester."

"Tell you what then, Kate. Your mother must come down here. That's plain!"

"What a pity, isn't it? If I only knew I should be fit to travel on Wednesday!"

"Even then, you couldn't quite safely travel alone. No, no: your mother must come down here. When I go back, to-morrow, I shall tell her so; and she will have to stay with you till you are fit to go to town."

"But, Charley, I can't go to town. I won't think of it. Remember my Manchester engagement. I will only lose the first week of that. Trust me not to lose any more!"

"But, Kate, you must take care of yourself. You must take care of yourself, little Kate," said Charley Hassell, in the kindest of ways, coming quite close to the fine girl whom he styled "little Kate," and laying his hand on her head, while the pale bright face, with the clear honest eyes, looked up at him half in amazement.

"This is rather strong, Mr. Charley," said Kate, smiling, "though you *have* been very good to me."

"Dear Kate! You good brave little Kate! Do you know I used to be almost afraid of you, sometimes. You knew so well how to take care of yourself—a regular little London girl. *Now*, I'm not at all afraid of you."

"It don't look like it," answered the young woman, pleased, amused, and blushing.

"Do you know why?"

"Perhaps you think my illness has tamed me."

"No, not that, at all. If I have tried to be kind to you, you've been very good to me, and

I'm not afraid of you because some day or other—when we both are better off—you are going to marry me, Miss Kate. I won't allow you to say no."

"I never said Yes, Mr. Charley—you never gave me the opportunity."

As Mrs. Harper was opening the door, our young friend resumed his seat at a respectful distance. He was then bidden to stay to tea, and he willingly accepted. "Tea" in Yorkshire does not mean a single cup. It is no formal supplement to dinner. It is a separate and ample meal. "Tea" means a ham, savoury and succulent, upon the table; luscious preserves, light toast, good bread, and relays of cakes—some stuffed with currants, some plain, all profusely buttered—coming in from the kitchen, steaming hot. It is not the meal of a *gourmet*, but of a countryman who as yet is blissfully unconscious that he has a stomach. Charley, though a Londoner, was similarly fortunate, and at the evening meal every one was pleasant and merry.

Next morning, before returning to town, young Hassell saw Kate and her good friends again. It was but a short interview, for an early train bore him back to London, and bore him back happy in the thought of Kate's frank healthy natural love. That evening he was at Notting Hill; and when he left it, late at night, by the last omnibus bound towards Camberwell, it had been decided that Mrs. Hassell should go to Scarborough on Wednesday—the day on which the Harpers would be obliged to leave.

The plan was executed. Mrs. Hassell got to Scarborough on Wednesday evening. The Harpers had started that morning for Manchester, and Kate was alone in the lodgings. But she was already much better than when Charley had seen her on Saturday and Sunday.

“In another week,” she exclaimed, “I really shall be able to go away, mother.”

“And come back 'ome, along with me?” Mrs. Hassell said.

"Oh, no! I should like it very much. You know I should. But I mean to get on well at Manchester, and I must go there as soon as ever I can."

"You can go there after a 'oliday at 'ome."

"No, no, mother. I don't require a holiday. This rest is quite enough for me. During the week you stay here, you'll see how much stronger I'll get."

"You might be ill again, Kate."

"No, I shan't be : indeed, mother ! 'Twasn't the regular acting that knocked me up, but the long hours—all the study and all the rehearsals for the last week of the season. At Manchester, when a piece is once on, it runs twenty or thirty nights, or more, so that for weeks together only your evenings are occupied ; there being no rehearsals wanted."

"I won't promise nothing, my dear. Wait and see 'ow you are."

"That's right, mother. If it's necessary, I'll take a longer holiday and go back to London, though I expect I should lose my Manchester

engagement altogether. But you don't want to meddle with my getting on, if it's not necessary, do you?"

So Kate waited, with as much patience as could be expected from a girl of her swift nature, and gradually gained strength. Her mother took her out for drives, and walked with her twice a day upon the cliff, and by the time Mrs. Hassell's first week was over her daughter had so much recovered that there was no longer any thought of removing her to town. But Charley had persuaded the honest saddler of Notting Hill that he could spare his wife another fortnight, and the saddler was well aware that another week of rest would probably be of great service to Kate. The elder Hassell accordingly desired his spouse to retain the lodgings and to remain in them with his step-daughter. To an arrangement so evidently for her benefit Kate could make no objection, and by the time that Mrs. Hassell had completed her fortnight no anxiety rested on the maternal mind with regard to Kate's departure for

Manchester. The manager had been communicated with, and he had declared his readiness to appoint Miss Lemon's first appearance at his theatre for Saturday the nineteenth of December. It was necessary that she should be in the town a few days before this event, to take part in the rehearsals. Mr. and Mrs. Harper were ready to receive her, and she arrived in Manchester at the appointed time.

At Notting Hill, Mr. and Mrs. Hassell anxiously awaited the news of her reception by a larger public than that of Scarborough. Charley, too, thought of her at Camberwell, and thought of her in Lincoln's Inn. Kate's name arose to trouble and distract him in his office work. He bought the play in which she was to act—Colman's comedy of *The Heir at Law*—and asked every one whom he met if he or she knew well the works of the elder or the younger Colman. If so, was *The Heir at Law* one of the best pieces of their time, and was "Cicely Homespun's" a good part? His own impressions were favourable : both of the play

and of the character. Kate would make something of that rural heroine. It would be a performance worth the seeing.

The post on Monday morning put an end to our young friend's anxiety. A rapid line from Kate, written on Sunday, told of her success. At the play's close she had been called before the curtain. The manager had said a kind word to her in the green-room. Mr. Harper, in walking home with her, had not ceased to express his delight.

Going to Notting Hill in the evening, Charley found that Kate's mother had received similar intelligence. There was thus far every reason to be satisfied ; but what would the papers say ? Another twelve hours' suspense, and there arrived three daily journals. One said that Miss Lemon "possessed considerable personal attractions" — in other words, "is pretty," thought Charley—but that while pleasing the house, she had misconstrued the part. The other two agreed in averring that her freshness and naïveté had been the most conspicuous

merits of that evening's performance. In London, Kate's friends were satisfied. Mrs. Hassell did her household tasks with contentment at Kate's success, the worthy saddler pursued his calling with meditations not unmixed with pride on account of his step-daughter, and Charley went to work with a will among the sheets of foolscap, law books, and yards of pink tape, scattered about his desk in Lincoln's Inn.

CHAPTER XI.

THE short but warm bright days which pass for winter in the south were giving place to signs of spring; and Warner, by the middle of February, had finished his picture, and was ready to move from Hyères. Now, however, a return to England was no longer the subject of his thoughts. To go back some time or other—to resume at some indefinite period the familiar London life of studio work, and drawing-room entertainment, and club-house gossip—was no doubt his intention; but the intention was far in the background of his mind, and the day for executing it was at an unmeasured distance. The present life, with Dolores Burton, was all that he cared for now.

After it had flashed upon him with one transient touch of the bitterness of dismay, that he could never write to his wife again — could never again see her — Warner felt a consciousness of wrong not far removed from shame, a lingering regret not easily distinguished from remorse. That day, he avoided Mrs. Burton, and worked alone with savage energy, from dawn to dusk — the whole brief time of sunlight. The next, he was again at the feet of the enchantress.

She saw the progress he had made with his picture, and knew that it approached completion. She had asked herself what he would do when it was quite finished. Could she count upon his remaining her willing vassal, and simply lingering wherever she should linger? No. Not yet. He might one day tire of her, and that might be before the day when she would tire of him. She put these thoughts together, and in her mind revolved her different plans; speaking to him all the while in accents of almost girlish confidence, with the amplitude

that passes for frankness—in truth her thoughts were never less known to Paul than when she pretended to unbosom herself of secrets which were only for him.

“I have never seen the Cornice Road,” she said to him, one evening at the Hermitage—the place of her first avowal—“and I long to see it. Let us go together.”

He said that he had been along its course already—that he had seen the Riviera—and that his picture still kept him at Hyères, where he had arranged a painting room. But she seemed determinèd to go, and the less ready he appeared to leave at once, the more strongly did she declare that before forty-eight hours passed she would start, had she even to start alone. It was a successful threat. It gained Paul’s promise to go with her, if she would but delay her departure till the picture should be finished. That would be in four days. Mrs. Burton, while appearing impatient, willingly agreed to the delay. Time was in reality of no importance at all to her.

She had secured her point—the retention of Warner.

The days went by. The painter and the siren started for San Remo. It was decided that no stay at all should be made in Nice. Mrs. Burton had excellent reasons for wishing to avoid it.

Warner did not practise that abstinence from correspondence with his wife which had at first seemed to him indispensable. It was difficult to write at any time, but more difficult not to write at all. He could not bring himself to take a step which would sever him for ever from Madeleine. Perpetual silence would be more than a discomfort to her: it might, he thought, cause injury to her health. He was obliged to write, though the writing could not but be deceptive.

So half in cowardice, though half in kindness, Warner wrote to Madeleine of his prospects for the spring. He wrote from San Remo on the day of his arrival, and said that he had started to visit again—this time more

leisurely — the famed Cornice Road. He would gradually work his way home, he said,—perhaps it might be through Switzerland. Meanwhile, to avoid delay, and the needless risk of repeated journeys, he had already caused to be forwarded from Hyères the picture which had occupied him in Paris. Madeleine was to tell him what she thought of it, and was to undertake its charge for the next six or seven weeks; at the end of that time it was to be sent to the Academy, whose hanging committee would just then be beginning its wearisome task.

It was a long time before Warner could tell Mrs. Burton anything of his life at home. It was hard to mention Madeleine, and he might perhaps never have been the first to refer to her. Mrs. Burton relieved him of the difficulty. In those days of sojourn on the Cornice Road she had access to all his papers. He attempted no concealment from her: nay, more, he even wished her to become aware of his

position, by almost any means, save a word of his.

They were sitting, one balmy afternoon in the second half of February, under the little verandah of the small villa they tenanted at Savona—for they had advanced quickly thus far, had been pleased with the place, and had chosen it for a stay. Mrs. Burton was alternately playing with a piece of fancy work, which did not make much progress, and looking at the painter in her most bewitching fashion. Warner was supposed to be reading aloud from a book of Théophile Gautier's; but he was in reality more occupied with watching the few little boats that were floating lazily on the sleeping sea. He had read a little, but neither he nor his companion had spoken, and Mrs. Burton now seemed in meditation.

"Poor Paul!" she said, filling the silence with a musical undertone that hardly seemed to break it. "You are quiet now, and you are so happy."

"What?" asked Warner, unable to divine

her thought, and wishing to know it. "What do you mean?"

"Your wife must have behaved shamefully to you, or you would never have left her."

"My wife!" said Paul, half in astonishment.

"Yes—you should not leave your letters about. I am thoroughly trustworthy as an acquaintance; but as a *chère amie*, I find myself terribly inclined to jealousy. I say, your wife must have behaved shamefully to you. It is very easy for her to be contrite after your departure."

"Dolores," said Paul Warner, looking up gravely, "you must know everything. My wife did *not* behave shamefully to me. She cared for me very truly, and cares for me still. Girls, like my wife, do not conduct themselves as you surmise."

"She never understood you then, and never tried to. That is behaving shamefully; for you deserve to be understood."

"It was not her fault, poor thing! At all events, not wholly her fault, that we were

unsuited to each other. She would have made a perfect wife for some men. I know it very well : nothing that ever passed between us led me to think otherwise. I am only sorry that I am not the kind of man to whom a woman finds it easy to be a perfect wife."

"If you married a woman who had not the brains to understand you, the misfortune is yours."

"Not altogether. To a quite commonplace person, or, indeed, to any clever man who separates his work from his life, she would be all that is required. But I, who live for Art and in Art, and am often much more artist than man—a mere piece of mechanism, as I have sometimes thought, invented to see what is beautiful in the world, and now and again to reproduce this with more or less adroitness—I cannot be satisfied with less than a *little* sympathy with my Art. Poor girl! She has none to give me."

"You shall work well when you work

again, for we have had together the two things that an artist needs—sympathy in excitement and sympathy in rest. I am devoted to you, and will do you good.”

“You understand me so much, Dolores,” said Warner, really grateful. “Yes; such a woman as you are might be the making of a man, if there were anything in him to begin with.”

“How did you come to marry in this way at all? Confide in me. How was it?”

“Now that is too much of a good thing!” said Warner, smiling almost bitterly. “Are not a man’s love affairs the things which least of all he dares to analyse? Gracious Heaven! Only look round you! Speaking of marriages alone—of ill-assorted matches made for life—you do not need to come to mine to see plainly enough the folly of asking *how* they come about. I suppose they come about as battles do—because the Fates decree a destruction of happiness on a gigantic scale.”

“Oh, yes, of course! We know there is

delusion enough. But what was your particular delusion, I wonder? What gave rise to *your* mistake?"

"Perhaps it was an experiment, though I don't think I was conscious of it at the time. If it was, it failed—like most experiments. My wife, before I married her, doubtless contrasted favourably with the girls one chiefly meets in London. She had, at all events, what they have not—a genuine love of Nature—if she lacked what the rest of them lack—a serious interest in any Art. For mind, Dolores, I mean what I am saying: it is this that sickens us who really love Art—the mere pretence of most women with regard to it. It is a fashionable subject for them: that is all. It provides them with the requisite amount of small talk, in which, according to their knowledge—save the mark!—they classify us painters. Of course there are exceptional women, in exceptional circles; but what is the typical girl?"

"Don't give us the satire of the *Saturday*. We have had enough of it."

“ I am not dwelling, as the *Saturday* does, especially on fast girls. I ask, what is the typical girl of merely fashionable London ? She is a simpering miss, whose pleasure in life is proportionate to the number of young fellows to whom she can bow in the Park. She is a person who giggles, or ogles sometimes, in church, under the shelter of an ivory Prayer Book ; who always laughs at a silly thing said in society, because she rarely understands a good one. At thirty, she will lose her superficial graces, and admired no more, will no more be happy. I shudder to think of what she will be at forty ; but as she is not without ambition, even when young, I conjecture that at that age she will be an enterprising mother ; fretful in her home, but wreathing smiles in London drawing-rooms, upon the heirs to lands and titles—elbowing the way for her young daughters into the upper circles of the ‘ Social Purgatory.’ Gracious Heaven ! That is a life worth living, and this the sort of woman it would do one good to be connected with ! ”

He had risen, in the warmth of his talk, and was pacing the stones of the verandah.

"My goodness!" exclaimed Mrs. Burton. "What an amount of indignation! One would almost think, upon my word, that you were a virtuous man!"

"What?" said Warner, suddenly stopping. There was a moment's pause. "Ah! Yes," he said slowly, in a tone that was half of bitterness, half of regret.

Mrs. Burton was too keen not to notice this, but she did not notice it soon enough to suppress her hard unmodulated laugh of vice—of vice that has gained its ends. Condolence, sympathy, aspiration: these were words to her, or at most they were phases of manner. She laid them aside, she took to them again, with equal ease. They were as garments, draping her nakedness.

Beneath depths of evil, there are depths greater still. Sudden intuition had told Paul Warner that he and his companion did not stand quite together. It is not everything to

cherish in common intellectual aims. Warner was not wholly intellect: he was not wholly a cold abstraction. With many faults, with faults that were increasing, he was yet moved at intervals by pure aspirations. To Mrs. Burton these things were a mystery. They were a superstition.

CHAPTER XII.

WHILE Mrs. Burton was staying at the Hôtel des Princes, at Nice, there had come and gone many of her fellow-countrymen, though none whom she knew personally. Amongst those whose stay at the hotel had been short, was Mr. Greville Byng, a young Englishman of good family and fair fortune.

Mr. Byng was not a member of any profession : he was a gentleman at ease. Had circumstances induced him to embrace a vocation, he would probably have selected that of a detective police officer—supposing it to have been in his power. Because he was a gentleman at ease, his friends called him “an idle man ;” but this was much to his distaste, and he protested that he found ample employment

for his brains, though not in the way of money-making. He was one of a class always numerous in an opulent and highly civilised land—young men upon whom there has never dawned an idea of responsibility in life: young men who being without the will to work, are also, unfortunately, without the necessity. In the country these men kill time very slowly: now by field sports, without genuine pleasure; now by representing their sovereign lady, with better men, on the bench of county magistrates. In great capitals they do not need to kill time at all, because they find a hundred ways of mis-using it. We owe to them the extravagance of our half-educated women, the brainlessness of our amusements, and the obtrusiveness of “St. John’s Wood.” To such as these a national crisis might come as a beneficent deliverer, calling them to action. War, if it could not purge them, might at all events sweep them away.

Of those who are neither impelled by necessity nor feeling to take up any branch of

the world's varied business—those for whom trade has no needful reward ; politics, the arts, and letters, no attraction—Greville Byng was certainly one of the least harmful. He had two pursuits : the mysteries of the newspapers and the pleasures of the table. He entered upon both with the same gravity.

When a murder was committed for no open palpable reason, or when no doubt existed about the reason for the deed but much about its perpetrator, Greville Byng devoted his attention to the subject, and was sometimes on the spot as soon as the detective police. If a distinguished missionary did not return to England when he was expected, Mr. Byng was ready with an explanation. It is true, he did not go to Africa to investigate ; but he wrote, to *The Times* newspaper, reassuring letters from his club in Pall Mall. When all London was alarmed at the disappearance of Mr. Speke, Greville Byng gave his mind to the question, visited the worst slums in Westminster, and propounded a theory of murder so exceedingly ingenious that it made

converts day by day, until at last Mr. Speke appeared in safety at Bodmin, to the infinite disgust of the theorist.

When he was not occupied with whatever mysteries were the talk of the town, Mr. Byng was engaged with good living. He was by no means incompetent as a judge of dishes, but it was as a critic of wines that he desired reputation. Peasants might indeed make Clos Vougeot and Château Margaux, but it required a man of culture to estimate these treasures aright. To mature his judgment by the full process of tasting, Greville Byng had obtained introductions to some of the chief dealers and growers in the province of Burgundy and the districts round Bordeaux. He had qualified himself to be a successful wine-merchant—in order to be an epicure. Though young, he was on the committee of his club, and when he spoke of vintages his elders were silent.

Mr. Byng arrived at Nice the day previous to that on which Mrs. Burton left it. The carriage from the station set him down at the

door of the hotel some twenty minutes before the dinner-hour. He had just time to wash and dress, and hurry to the *table-d'hôte*. "A *table-d'hôte* is atrocious at any time," he thought, "but doubly atrocious when the dishes have been allowed to cool. However, I am not inclined to-night for a little dinner by myself."

He descended, and was motioned to a chair near the door of entrance. The servants offered him a common wine of the district. He called for the list, and selected a preferable drink. Then they brought to him the soup, which proved a disappointment; the fish, which was so cooked as to be a lamentable mistake; an *entrée*, which was not devoid of merit, and which put the diner into a better humour. Altogether, however, the repast was not worthy of grave attention. The hotel had evidently no claim to a *cuisine sérieuse*, and Mr. Byng had not watched it half through when he abandoned the attempt, and concentrated his thoughts on the company around.

"That is a face I know," thought Mr. Byng,

as his eye fell upon Mrs. Burton, at the other end of the table. "I know the face, but hang me if I can remember the name! This is what comes of your bad memories."

The more he looked, the more surely he recognized the lady. The more he tried to recollect who she was, the more hopelessly did he lose himself in profitless self-questioning. He did not know the face well, he thought. That is it, was not a face with which he was really familiar; but he had seen it once, at least, and he had good reason to remember it.

"There is nothing to do but to ask," he said to himself. "I shall never remember by racking my brains, while the bare name will tell me all I want to know. All will then become clear to me."

After dinner, he lounged for a few minutes about the steps of the hotel, smoking a cigarette, and then went inside to the little office where Madame Duval, the proprietress, sat looking over her ledger. Her niece, who "kept the books," was standing beside her.

Mr. Byng lifted his hat. The proprietress returned the salutation, but still sat at the desk at some yards' distance—too far for confidential communication with him, but quite close to her niece. She had but just come down from the brief interview with Mrs. Burton, in which that lady had cautioned the hotel-keeper not to disclose her name, and had held out some tangible inducement to secrecy. Mrs. Burton had been talking with Paul Warner at the dinner-table, and she expected him to make inquiries about her. The annoyance to which she had been subject, not in Madame Duval's house, was but a story to impart to the landlady. She had reasons of her own, we may suppose, for not wishing Warner to hear any name until he should arrive at Hyères.

"What does Monsieur desire?" said Madame Duval, very affably, but being, at the same time, thoroughly upon her guard. (She always spoke in English to her English guests.)

"Perhaps you can inform me," said Greville

Byng, who hesitated for a moment to put the real question, "whether the lady who was two seats from the head of the table, to the left—a handsome woman (English, I think,)—has been long in the hotel?"

"Let us see a little," said Madame Duval, appearing to consider,—“Let us see a little. No, really, I cannot say to you, sir,—I am unable to say.”

"What is her name?" asked Byng, grown bolder.

Madame Duval whispered to her niece a question as to her interrogator. The niece replied that she did not know him: he had arrived only just before dinner. Then Madame Duval, turning to the stranger, answered, "Assuredly, Monsieur does not ask her name?"

"I do, indeed."

"Monsieur is perhaps acquainted with her?"

"I know the face. I have seen her before. Yes, I am sure I know her; but I have forgotten who she is."

“Without doubt.” Madame considered. “And I also. I have no idea what she makes—does here. She has not told me how she is called—she has not told me her name, I mean to say, and in truth, sir, I ignore it.”

Mr. Byng bowed, and left the presence of the proprietress, who, thinking she had well fulfilled her part, determined not to speak of the incident to the lady, who would leave on the morrow. Besides, this questioning had been expected. The lady had warned her that it might occur at any moment.

Greville Byng went out into the street, and walked about for an hour, vexed with himself that he could not remember the name, but somewhat pleased, though also surprised, at the landlady's mystification.

“There is some reason,” he said to himself, “for this refusal to say who the woman is. There is something in it if the landlady, knowing the name, does not choose to divulge it; and there is something in it not a whit less surely, on the other hand, if the landlady herself

has never been told the name. But she has. Undoubtedly she has." Here was a woman whose face he knew, and about her name there was a mystery. In other words, here was amusement for Greville Byng, and scope for his ingenuity.

He went early to bed. He did not worry himself with guessing. He slept soundly, and woke next morning with the name in his head. The woman was Greyling's wife—the wife of his friend the Queen's Messenger, who was now in Persia. He had seen her only once before. He knew her husband familiarly.

Thanks to a good night's rest, this happy thought had come to him. Yes, she was Edwin Greyling's wife—he felt quite sure of it. Greyling had doubtless left her at Nice while he journeyed to Teheran in the service of the State. But why was her name a secret? Why should any mystery hang over her? And who was the man whom at yesterday's dinner she had seemed to know well and to like well?

Byng waited his time. Imagining no intrigue, he had asked for Mrs. Greyling's name in a way that was blunderingly simple. But from the moment that the affair appeared likely to be fraught with real interest to an amateur detective, he acted upon the maxim of the prince of diplomatists, "Above all, no zeal!" During the day he waited quietly at the hotel. From his window at noon he saw Mrs. Greyling depart in a luggage-laden carriage. Warner was evidently not accompanying her: that gentleman had indeed made no preparations for travel.

Mr. Byng thought it prudent, immediately he had witnessed the lady's departure, to order a carriage at the hotel, and to start, with as much ostentation as was possible, upon a drive of pleasure. It was to persuade Madame Duval that his movements were uninfluenced by those of the guest who had gone. Moreover, on his return from the drive, he signified his wish for a larger room, on the first floor: nay, for two rooms, if they could be had—he was accustomed

to space, he said. This was that by incurring greater expenses he might become at once a visitor of more importance than he was at first accounted.

That evening, he did not dine at the *table-d'hôte*; but he strolled into the room to assure himself that Warner was there. Walking out again, with *Galignani's Messenger* in his hand, he waited in his apartment till the public repast was over, and then descended to partake of the little meal which two hours previously he had commanded. An artistic dinner, if it could be obtained, would serve a double purpose. It would occupy an hour desirably, and would allay the suspicions of Madame Duval, who would doubtless hear of it.

Next morning, Warner went. Greville Byng saw him go; then rang the bell, and asked to speak to the landlady.

"Your hotel is charmingly situated," said he to Madame Duval as soon as she appeared.

"I am glad that monsieur finds it agreeable."

"Yes, these rooms are exceedingly com-

fortable, madame. I should like to make a long stay here."

"I hope that you do not find that my hotel leaves much to desire. I am well content, monsieur, if it can please you."

"It pleases me much, and would please me still more if you happened to know a little about the lady whose name I asked."

Madame Duval looked particularly gracious: almost affectionate, indeed. At all events her face was full of solicitude.

"What is this?" said Greville Byng, taking from his pocket a piece of thin paper, and carefully examining it. It was a note for twenty pounds. He handed it to the landlady.

"Can you oblige me with the change? Two hundred and fifty francs," he said, emphatically.

"See then, monsieur," said Madame Duval, holding it before him, to make sure that there was no misunderstanding. "Is it not five hundred?"

"You mistake it; you mistake it, madame," urged Mr. Byng. "The change is two hundred

and fifty francs, as *I* count money. Bullion is tight to-day, Madame Duval; as they say in the City article."

Madame Duval did not know what was meant by the City article, but she knew what was meant by the exchange of note for gold. She skipped away cheerfully; and in a very few minutes she skipped back again, bringing the money that was expected.

"I come," said she, "from learning the name of that lady. I have succeeded. It is Madame Greyling."

"Just so," answered Mr. Byng. "I remembered the name myself yesterday morning. But where has she gone, I wonder?"

"She is departed for Hyères, where she thinks to rest some time. She is descended, without doubt, monsieur, at the Hôtel de l'Orient. It is an excellent hotel."

"Ah!" remarked the Englishman. "It is an excellent hotel, is it? And Hyères is a pretty place—prettier, perhaps, than Nice?"

"*Ravissant*," replied the landlady.

“Well then, madame, I think I shall go there. I will leave this in a couple of hours.”

Under the circumstances, it was not in Madame Duval's power to object. So a carriage was ordered, and about noon Mr. Byng started.

Arrived at Hyères, he spent only one night in the Hôtel de l'Orient. The following morning, he moved to a neighbouring hostelry, where his action would naturally be freer. He had taken care, during his brief sojourn at the first hotel, to establish what he called “relations” there, and was sure of immediate information, if Mrs. Greyling left the place.

But, to tell the truth, before Mr. Byng had been a week at Hyères he was half inclined to be sorry that he had begun investigations. Time was heavy on his hands. The intrigue seemed to make no progress. Still, there was this much certain—that a wife of a friend of his had at Nice cautioned a landlady not to disclose her identity; that one day after she had left Nice for Hyères, a man staying at Nice

had left to follow her; that at her present quarters she had given an assumed name—the name of Burton. These were ugly facts. They were interesting, perhaps, to Byng, in his capacity of amateur detective, but they were somewhat painful to him in his capacity of friend to Edwin Greyling. Sometimes in his mind the sense of interest was the more vivid : sometimes, the sense of regret.

It was a matter of necessity that he should know the time at which Greyling was expected to return from Persia, and the route he would probably take. To acquire this information he wrote to Messrs. Milner and Parchby, the lawyers of Spring Gardens. These gentlemen were his own legal advisers and those of Mr. Greyling. He anxiously awaited an answer. The morning of the day on which Mrs. Greyling and Paul Warner left Hyères, and at a moment when Byng — apprised of their intention to depart—was exceedingly uneasy, and desirous of news which should allow him, if necessary, to follow them, there came an answer. Messrs.

Milner and Parchby announced that Mr. Byng was in error in supposing that the Queen's Messenger had only gone to Teheran. This journey, though sufficiently formidable—since it involved two or three weeks of travelling on horseback, with a caravan—would not complete Mr. Greyling's present task. Just before leaving London, he had placed in the hands of his lawyers, according to his custom, a memorandum of his route, from which it appeared that he expected to be at Athens within the first few days of March, travelling thence to London by Corfù, Ancona, Milan, and Paris. For Mr. Greville Byng's guidance, Messrs. Milner and Parchby added that Mr. Greyling would probably land at Ancona, from Corfù, not earlier than the seventh and not later than the seventeenth of March. Mrs. Greyling, whom they believed to be at Nice, possessed similar information.

To San Remo, and then to Savona, Greville Byng followed the couple. It was essential that he should know where they were located. Was it also essential that he should remain

where they were, or might he with advantage meet Greyling at Ancona? He decided for the second course; determining, however, to remain at Savona as long as it was possible to do so.

On the morning of the fifth—forty-eight hours before the earliest time at which the Queen's Messenger could land on the shore of the Adriatic—Byng would be obliged to leave for Ancona, *via* Genoa, Turin, Milan, and Bologna. Meanwhile, his life at Savona was necessarily secluded. Having followed his friend's wife to two or three places already, his presence might be remarked if she saw him. So all day long he remained indoors, walking out in the early morning and in the late evening.

He ascertained who was the landlord of the little villa at which Mrs. Greyling was staying, and on the pretext of a desire to know whether this abode would soon be to let, he ascertained that it was to be vacated on the 6th, and that Mrs. Greyling was going to Lucerne. "Doubtless," thought Byng, "she and the fellow she is

with will go together to a hotel or furnished apartment, and when her husband is expected she will move alone to another house." The surmise was correct. On the 5th, Mrs. Greyling sent a note to her husband, (*poste restante* at Ancona,) asking for a telegram to be addressed "*poste restante*, Lucerne," immediately he should land and receive her note. Her husband was sure to fulfil this request, and at Lucerne she would know his movements in ample time to get rid of Warner and to change her quarters to the Hôtel du Cygne—there to receive her lawful lord.

But Mr. Byng was in some difficulty how to ascertain where she would first stay at Lucerne. He could not safely pay any person at Savona to follow her and note her destination. He did not like to bring a professional element into the affair, or he could have asked somebody from the Private Enquiry Office in London to meet Mrs. Greyling without fail at Lucerne, and to wait there to tell him, on his arrival with the Queen's Messenger, her place of sojourn. Yet

it was of the utmost importance that he should know this place. Suddenly, a thought occurred to him. He had been an excellent customer, only the previous summer, at one of the smaller hotels. The landlord had been particularly attentive—he had anticipated every wish of his guest's—and as the cooking was better than at many inns, Mr. Byng had remained a fortnight. This was a man who might be trusted—his gratitude might look forward as well as backwards—and to him, therefore, Greville Byng would write. He wrote the note the day before leaving Savona. It impressed on the landlord that the writer relied absolutely on his meeting the boats that came down the lake from the St. Gothard route, and conveying to him, when he should arrive, correct intelligence of the destination of the lady and gentleman whom he described. Then, with more contented mind, Byng started for Ancona, knowing that though on the morrow the siren and her lover would leave for Switzerland, they would be still within his ken.

CHAPTER XIII.

FOR a *gourmet* who was justly distinguished—for a man who had ventured to abuse the cook at the Wyndham, who could have suggested not a few improvements at the Reform, and to whom breakfasts at the Café Anglais or at Véfour's had their weak points, which were to be lamented in the midst of such general excellence—the hotels in the eastern port of the old Roman states seemed scarcely other than barbarous. At the best of them Byng took up his abode, and resigned himself during several days to much macaroni, many sardines, meats that were doubtful, wines which he had never studied.

“Friendship demands great sacrifices,” thought our young detective, as he wiped out

his glass with a table napkin—after the fashion of a second-rate French restaurant—and stared gloomily at the roughly frescoed walls of the great dining-room. “To-day is the 8th. If he don’t come till his last day—the 17th—I shall not be fit for any effort of mind or body. This cook, this bungler, will have poisoned me unintentionally.”

But Byng was earnest to serve his friend. That friend had several claims on him. Greyling, who was much older than the young “idle man,” had encouraged him with praise and sympathy. They belonged to the same club. They had grumbled in concert over the same dinners, for Greyling too was a *gourmet* when his pressing duties allowed him to be; and in a word, there was between them much unity of feeling which had led to a friendship almost ripening to intimacy. So Greville Byng proved indefatigable. He met every boat that arrived: nay, more, he boarded every steamer that was merely halting at Ancona, and was going on afterwards to Trieste or Venice. This he did

lest Greyling should change his plan and not go homewards by rail through central Italy. For this precaution there was, however, no need, for on the 14th of March Edwin Greyling stepped ashore from the first boat put out from the Corfù steamer, then dropping anchor outside the harbour.

He looked bronzed and weather-beaten : rather better in health than on the evening he had strolled, some months before, into a Paris drawing-room, just as Paul Warner was leaving it after an introduction to his wife. He was tall and slight ; aged apparently about thirty-eight or thirty-nine years. His head—high and narrow—was already partially bald. His eyes were grey and cool, and over his thin clearly cut lips there drooped a long but scanty moustache.

At the sight of Greville Byng, Mr. Greyling seemed greatly surprised ; but Byng met him in such a manner as to allay his fears, if any had arisen, and told him nothing until the mid-day breakfast was ordered at the hotel. Then he told all.

Greyling became pale, and his hand shook when lifting the glass from which to drink. But he did drink.

"You do not give me," he said to his friend, after breakfast, "even the shadow of a doubt. I thought Mrs. Greyling was at Nice until within a few days of to-day. The servant of the hotel brings me a letter from the post-office here, in which Mrs. Greyling asks me to telegraph to her at the post-office at Lucerne, directly I arrive."

"You had better go at once towards Lucerne."

"Certainly. Where else, indeed? But thank you for reminding me. I shall of course send no telegram : that also is very evident."

"Undoubtedly you won't. The train that leaves here, Greyling, at three, passes through Bologna at ten o'clock, or thereabouts, and reaches Milan at about five in the morning. You must not knock yourself up, you know, and there is really no hurry. But I see no objection to your leaving Milan during the

day : perhaps within eight or ten hours of your arrival."

"I am a man of few words, you know," said Mr. Greyling moodily; "but there is one thing, Byng, which can be accomplished without many words : that is, the journey to Lucerne."

"You are naturally anxious," replied his companion.

"I feel this with some acuteness," said Greyling, now calmly rising from the table and walking to the window with the air of a man who is resolute and quiet. "I know, Byng, that I am not an emotional man. I am not naturally demonstrative. But I thank you heartily for the service you have done me—cruel though that service necessarily seems."

He wiped his mouth with the napkin he had taken in his hand, and put up his double eyeglass to look at the view.

"Dear me!" he continued, after a moment's pause, and now in a changed tone. "The boat does not stay long at Ancona then. I see she is getting up steam already."

"Yes," said Byng, glad that his friend was able with however great an effort to alter the current of his thoughts. "She leaves for Trieste in an hour or so, I think. Detestable place, Trieste."

"No," muttered Greyling, in a meditative strain, "I am not an emotional man, by any means. But this affects my honour. I am surprised at Barbara — Mrs. Greyling. It affects my honour—my honour, Byng. Be sure and allow ample time to get to the station. I would not be needlessly delayed on my journey. This fellow, you speak of, has lived long enough with Mrs. Greyling already. When I reach Lucerne, I shall shoot him like a dog, Byng. Dear me, it is inclined for rain I see! . . . Shoot him like a dog."

CHAPTER XIV.

BARBARA GREYLING persuaded Paul Warner to take at Lucerne a small furnished house for a month from the 8th of March. Though she knew that her husband might, by rapid travelling, arrive in Switzerland as early as the 9th or 10th, that could only be if he reached Ancona at the beginning of the period during which he was expected there. Of this she would be duly apprised by telegram. It was quite safe, she reasoned, to count upon this. But it was far more probable that he would not be in Switzerland till the 19th or 20th, and very likely that even then his stay with her at the "Hôtel du Cygne" could not be more than of a few hours. A Queen's Messenger may not loiter. Probably he would have to push his

way to London at once, and thither she could follow him at her leisure. Perhaps, by that time she might be tired of Warner: if so, it would be easy to leave him. Did he not still think her "Dolores Burton?"

The agent at Lucerne had taken for Warner a small villa just above the road that leads from the Quai Schweizerhof to the hamlet of Seeburg, and beyond this to Meggen, skirting the lake. On the left, as you go from the town, there rises the hill on whose first gentle slope, at an elevation of some sixty feet, stands the cathedral church—St. Leodegar. This hill, rising to the Three Lindens, and higher again, broken only by a ravine, to the summit called by Lucernois "the Little Rigi," is always on the north-east of the road to Seeburg and Meggen. On the right hand, as you walk or drive from the town, the lake, or, rather, that narrow arm of it which runs up to Lucerne, is close beside you, and beyond it, looking south-west, the country is heaved into broad buttresses, which surround and support the soaring crags of

Pilatus. From the main road, scarcely a quarter of a mile from the last group of houses, a private drive, but unenclosed save by a straight avenue of poplars, slopes up the hill-side to the villa, and beyond the villa it descends again to the main road by an avenue like that through which it mounts. Above the house, the ground rises precipitously to the upper high road from Lucerne, and up again to the Three Lindens and to the noble woods of which those lime-trees are the scattered outposts.

Warner and Barbara Greyling arrived on the 8th of March—seeing Lucerne for the first time at such an early period of the year—and they were duly and silently recognized by Mr. Greville Byng's deputy, who found it easy at that season to leave his empty inn. The agent also met them. He had secured a drochska, and in this carriage the painter and his enchantress were driven to the *land-haus* on the Meggen Road. They found two servants—a young house-boy and an old woman-cook—prepared to receive them.

The villa is entered from behind; the narrow drive occupying the space between the walls of the building and the rising hill, covered just there with evergreens. Opposite the double flight of steps and the door to which each short flight leads, there is placed a plain stone fountain, from which the water, rising from the rock under turf and shrubs, trickles into the broad basin which receives it—making, by day and night, a quiet plashing, heard constantly through open windows in the surrounding stillness. The hall—large for so small a villa—the rooms for service and the wide staircase leading to the bedrooms occupy all the back of the house. In front, on the first floor—which is the ground floor slightly raised—are the three reception rooms: a small drawing-room, a drawing-room smaller still, and a simple dining-room, all with French windows opening on to a verandah, which is flatly roofed with stone, and which stretches along the house-front facing the lake. The roof of this verandah, heavy and low, is

supported by thick circular pillars, plain and white, trailed over by vines from the garden a few feet beneath. All this makes a perfect frame for the picture beyond—the still lake and lofty sky, the undulating pastures on the low hills opposite, and above these the great mountain ranges: Pilatus, near; the chain of the Oberland, white everlastingly; distant Titlis, the Uri Rothstock, and the St. Gothard cleft in the great wall which shuts out Italy.

“It is a scene,” thought Warner, as he stepped on to the verandah, “of the most perfect peace and perfect splendour!”

“See,” he called to Mrs. Greyling, who then came out to listen, as if she hung on all his words, “though it is not quite like that wonderful Riviera we have left, it is lovely enough, is it not? The vines trailing here will soon begin to shoot, I declare. What an early season! And all this snow on the mountains has its advantage. If you were here in summer, you would not, if I remember rightly, see any but Titlis and the chief Oberland range covered

with white. Now Pilatus, nearly down to his base, is covered, and so are many of these other mountains."

"It is cold," said Mrs. Greyling, shivering after her journey; "you had better come in."

"Cold! With this brilliant sun, too! Here I am, just in the eye of it. You see that hill, Dolores, to the right of Pilatus—there, over the town—with a little *Kur-haus* on its summit. That is the Sonnenberg."

"Who would be up there now?" said the lady. "I am better here, though it *is* cold. Save me from whey and thin milk, while this weather lasts. After all, this is not Italy. I was born for Italy."

"And I, Dolores, for any country that can show me some beautiful things. I give my life to reproducing beauty. May I not ask to be surrounded with it? So I am, indeed, here! Here you must be my model, you know."

"You shall draw at last," she said, placing her arm in his, pressing it, and then leaving him to go back into the house.

"Strange!" thought Paul Warner. "That is a quaint remark that is made in *Felix Holt*: 'with all amplification of travel by land and sea, a man cannot get away from his past history.'"

The next two days were bright with the spring sun. Mrs. Greyling did not complain of cold. Then came a day of constant rain, warm and fructifying, and afterwards there was sunshine again. The season was indeed wonderfully early: the green was beginning to show itself. Peasants told Warner, on his long walks, that the country often looked less forward in the middle of April. He had not come, they said, too soon to enjoy the place.

And indeed he did in some sense enjoy it. Its beauty had upon him a strange influence. Something of his pleasure in it he expressed in a letter to Ringley, written on the 15th—the day, we may remember, after that on which Edwin Greyling had landed at Ancona, and with resolute purpose had continued his journey.

“A few words from Lucerne, though you will wonder at the duration of my absence, which will be best explained—if explained at all—when I return next month.

“Madeleine will send my picture to the Academy, if by sending-day I have not come back. It is a single figure. The model sat for me in Paris. The picture was finally done with at Hyères; though little important work required to be done there at all. I spent more time than usual, however, upon the accessories: perhaps not so much because they needed elaboration as because I liked to linger over a canvas which already satisfied me as far as the figure was concerned, and as far as any artist worth the name dares to be satisfied with his work.

“Now I am at Lucerne, as you see, in the midst of all natural beauties. This is a mountain view not generally too highly thought of, and in this respect unlike some, to be had in Switzerland. Take the view from the Terrace at Berne, for instance: the view of the chain of the Oberland.

As a chain of mountains it is fine, I allow : one of the most complete and extensive I have seen. But considering this, how extremely unimpressive ! It seems to me to form too much the mere background to the picture. One is not *among* the mountains. They do not even face you closely as at Interlaken : a place, by the bye, much overpraised.

“ Now here at Lucerne the mountains form almost a semi-circle round about you. And they are so large that they seem to hold the lake, as a flower’s bell holds a dew-drop. They are not seen only as snow hills in outline. They show on the contrary every variety of form and colour, shadow and light.

“ You know Lucerne ? An absolutely green and sparkling lake, rippling among the reeds by the shore in a ‘ wild metallic music.’ Across the water there is a sloping stretch of orchards, light in the sun, and above these are dark pine-trees winding in and out of the ravines of the hills. On one side of us is the Rigi, partly snow-covered, and rather on the other—though

indeed it may almost be called opposite—is Pilatus, with a series of side crags propping up, so to say, the central peaks, and these peaks turned towards each other, like a pair of giant claws gripping the sky. The landscape has that rare union, absolute loveliness and absolute power.

“ In the early forenoon, this Pilatus, with his snow, seems to me simply perfect : such pure white crags, with intense restful shadows, thrown up into the pale blue morning sky. Nature paints that picture, so to speak, with so clean a palette. I never saw such purity of tone. In the evening, too, Pilatus looks magnificent, seen as part of the sunset view from the Three Lindens—a rosy glow first spread over all, then failing gradually from below, then gone altogether with the sun. The snow masses are instantly turned to a bluish and dead cold. The very lake is dull lead and a chill is in the air. Then, for one moment, over all the mountain lines, the sky is a rose fog; the lake, a calm warm twilight mirror. This is the last effect—a very short one.”

CHAPTER XV.

AT three o'clock of the day on which Edwin Greyling arrived at Ancona, he left by train, with Greville Byng, for Milan. The two Englishmen were the only occupants of the railway carriage, and the train did not go at such a speed as to make conversation inconvenient. Slowly it wound northward, along the curved Adriatic shore.

"This is easy travelling, compared with that to which I have lately been used," said Mr. Greyling, sitting back in his seat ; "but an idle man such as you should not be content with this kind of thing. It would be well worth your while to go to Teheran, if only for the sake of the long journey in the open air. You need not be a

good horseman. Ride as badly as you like, so that you don't get tired."

"I don't ride at all."

"That is your misfortune. But I was about to observe that there is much to see in Persia. Strange country; strange houses, full of textile fabrics, very rich and tasteful; strange bazaars, strange men and women. Go to Persia, Byng. Teheran is really worthy of study."

He told an amusing story of an adventure in that Eastern capital. Greville Byng laughed at it: the teller did not even smile. As early as nine o'clock, if not before, both men disposed themselves for sleep; and ten minutes after this settling down for slumber, Byng, who was still awake, heard the deep regular breathing of his companion.

"Queer fellow!" he thought. "Cool enough, in all conscience! What am I to do with the man? He is determined upon vengeance, and any attempt to dissuade him from it would only increase, if possible, his resolution. The man has evidently counted the cost: it is no passion-

ate impulse. Oh, nothing of the sort! I should be quite powerless to stop him; and, upon my soul, I do not know that I should wish to do so. He means a duel, of course; 'shoot him like a dog' was only a figure of speech. Well, it will go badly with Mrs. Greyling's lover: it will go badly with him, poor soul! That is his own look out, however; yet women are often worse than men, and perhaps it is Mrs. Greyling who deserves to suffer the most . . . How uncommonly soundly he sleeps!"

Presently Byng slumbered also, but not for long. Both were awakened by the slow jolting over cross-lines, the sound of the wheels' friction, the clatter of voices, and the glare of light, which told of their arrival at some central station. Greyling re-adjusted his travelling-cap, lowered the glass, and leaned out of the window.

"Bologna!"

Here there was supper, hurriedly taken in the station refreshment room. Afterwards, a walk for two or three minutes on the platform,

that the travellers might stretch themselves. Then the train re-filled and re-started.

Edwin Greyling drew close the little spring curtain which is pulled horizontally over the lamp in the roof of the carriage. He shut both windows, ensconced himself in a corner of the compartment, and tucked a rug round his legs. This was a man accustomed to travel, and accustomed to spare himself all needless fatigue. Byng followed his example, and soon—in the subdued and soothing light—both slept. So Modena was passed.

After an hour, Greyling awoke, lifted his head, and sat upright with folded arms, noticing the slight oscillation of the carriage and the still sleeping figure of Greville Byng. Through the window-panes there was no view. There was only the dark night outside, and the train was rushing on along the iron lines, through unknown vineyards, unknown fields, past scattered villages where the peasants slept. Suddenly, a pressure from the front: the train was slackening. A signal-post, with a lighted lamp. A long low

whistle of approach. More lights, and moving figures.

“ Parma ! ”

Greyling did not sleep again. He sat up quite still and patiently ; now with closed eyes, now with eyes widely opened and fixed upon his friend. The darkness had diminished. Objects were gradually shaping themselves out of the night. A dreary dawn. A grey sky streaked with red. A wild March morning.

“ Milan ! ”

A carriage was hired to drive to the hotel, where Byng, at the request of his friend, immediately enquired for the time-table of the St. Gothard diligence. He discovered that it would be necessary to leave at four o'clock. Till then, there were ten hours. The travellers would rest in bed-rooms until breakfast time, spend the morning as they felt inclined, and dine as early as two, so as to start again renewed and refreshed.

After their chocolate, Mr. Byng went out for a stroll. Coming in at about eleven o'clock,

he said to Greyling,—“Would you like to come and show me the cathedral? I have not yet been inside.”

“I am writing,” was the answer: “it will occupy some time. Order dinner punctually at two, please. We leave the house at half-past three.”

“I have ordered dinner already. I saw no use in troubling you with the question, so I gave the order in writing, immediately after breakfast. The cooking is known to be not bad here; so I chose this house without hesitation.”

“Quite right,” said Greyling, who could hardly repress a smile. “Quite right,” he repeated. “Now, Byng, you would do well to occupy yourself with the cathedral and with the pictures in the Brera, until the event of your day.”

“Very well,” replied Byng. “I suppose one can wile away two or three hours over them.”

He left, and Greyling resumed his pen.

At half-past one Mr. Byng knocked at the door and entered, having completed his round of sight-seeing.

"Back already!" said Greyling. "Well, I have finished my business."

"Yes," drawled Mr. Byng. "I have seen the cathedral, the Brera, and the *Last Supper*. They are all exceedingly good. The *valet de place* wanted to take me to a private gallery, which many people try to see, he said; but I know it is well to rest for twenty minutes before dinner; so I dismissed him when he had shown me Leonardo's very remarkable fresco. Pity it is so dilapidated, by the way!'

At two o'clock the friends repaired to the public dining-room.

"This fish," said Greville Byng, when the soup had disappeared and the next dish was handed to them, "is brought from the Lake of Como. It imparts great interest to the Lake of Como. Very delicate, and not at all discredibly dressed. Notice this fish, Greyling."

"It is excellent," replied the Queen's

Messenger. "That it is here at all does credit to your memory, Byng, my dear fellow."

They sat in silence during several moments.

"You have ordered wine?" resumed Greyling, as his companion seemed pre-occupied.

"Looked to it ages ago," was the answer. "You shall see what they give you with the next dish. Here is also Sauterne upon the table: I thought it a good opportunity to take it, now that there are two of us. Nature meant Sauterne to be shared, for after the first glass one loses the bouquet, and it always seems a shame to have to send away a bottle from which only one glass has been taken."

"Exactly. Now, Byng, there is a little matter on which I must speak to you. Does this waiter know English?"

"Not a word, for I tried him before dinner. No, nor French, indeed."

"No! What a wonder! Well, I have been putting my affairs in order, while you have been sight-seeing this morning. It is in view, you know, of the possible though not probable

result of my meeting with this painting-fellow at Lucerne. It is well to be on the safe side ; and now everything is in order. There will be two or three papers for you to take charge of."

"With pleasure ; though I am not in the slightest degree apprehensive. Pity though, that you should have taken up with this foreign custom ! But your nerve is equal to anything, and you know your weapons."

"Everything is in perfect order," continued Greyling. "I have no money lent out, for instance. When Colman Babil, the actor, took the Piccadilly Theatre into his hands, he asked me for a loan of a couple of thousands. It was repaid the day before I left England. I have made, naturally enough, some change in the disposal of my property. Mrs. Greyling, who has eight hundred a year in her own right—settled on her by her first husband, Sefton Winter, an Englishman of very good family, who lived with her at Brussels—Mrs. Greyling, I say, will find and have to find this income

sufficient, whether I die in thirty years' time or die to-morrow. I leave my money, naturally enough, in another direction. I have a niece. You never heard me speak of her ; but this is how it is—my only brother, who died a couple of years or so ago, disgraced his family when he was quite a young man, and I a child, by marrying a girl of the lower classes. The thing touched our honour.”

“Ye-es,” said Byng with some hesitation, as if he was hardly aware that it did.

“It touched our honour, and my father was determined he should suffer for it : he knew, of course, that my brother had legacies which would prevent his exposure to absolute hardship, and accordingly I inherited the property. My brother was many years older than myself. I never had the opportunity of entertaining any personal affection for him, but still you will believe me, Byng—knowing me to be completely free from any affectation—when I tell you that I did not always feel quite satisfied to possess the whole of the property. By a will made at

the time of my marriage, perhaps a year after I had heard quite incidentally of my brother's death, I did my best to rectify this mistake. By that will, his only child, a daughter, comes in for a legacy of three thousand pounds from me, and the bulk of my property goes to Mrs. Greyling."

"You have altered that already, I hope."

"This morning. Yes. The easiest and most equitable thing to do, under the circumstances, was to give and bequeath the bulk of this property to my niece. That is what I have just done."

"The niece may thank her stars! But is it witnessed?"

"You and the English chaplain—he is due here at three o'clock—will together witness the new will, and it will be placed with other papers in your charge for my lawyers, Milner and Parchby, of Spring Gardens. That reminds me, it is time to be going."

"A second glass of this, though, Greyling. It is Brane Mouton, and not to be despised. It is

not every one, my dear fellow, who can tell Brane Mouton, when he tastes it."

A minute or two afterwards they left the table.

Always at the disposal of his fellow-countrymen, the chaplain had punctually arrived. It was but the work of a very short time to go through the necessary formalities, and then Greyling and Byng were free to continue their route. The next stage was an uneventful one, but things soon changed.

A winter journey across the St. Gothard, or a journey in the middle of March, is not performed with the rapidity with which it is accomplished in summer. About Airola, the snow—always thick till the late spring—was made thicker by a heavy fall during the few hours immediately preceding the arrival there of Greyling and his friend. But the two journeyed on together, upon sledges, not wheels, until the summit of the mountain was passed and the conveyances had descended the very short distance between the Monastery

at the top and the little village of Hospenthal. Here there occurred another snow-storm, and the conductor of the diligence said they would not proceed.

"So much the better!" exclaimed Greville Byng, getting out with cramped legs, and beating his chest violently with both his arms. "I really have no wish to do anything dangerous. I am always full of enterprise—so long as it is unattended with danger."

"But I must get on," said Edwin Greyling, impatient for the first time. "I must get on!"

"You can't," his friend replied. "You can't get on before the rest of us."

They walked into the little inn. They warmed themselves externally at the great stove which occupied nearly a third of the tiny guest-room, and internally by glasses of neat brandy, which soon quickened the flow of blood in their veins.

"We shall go on in a couple of hours, gentlemen," said the conductor, putting his head in at the door of the room.

"Very good," said Greville Byng. "It is perfectly safe, I hope?"

"Of course," replied Edwin Greyling, taking it upon himself to answer this remark. "I have crossed these passes in every kind of weather. This detention is a stupid nuisance. Conductors are more cautious than old women."

They waited an hour. Then Greyling stepped out, and asked if they were going to start. Less snow was falling.

"We shall go on in a couple of hours," answered the conductor.

"This sort of thing does not suit me," Mr. Greyling thought. "The detention may be quite indefinite, and Barbara will conjecture that I have omitted to telegram, and will prepare either to receive me alone or to run away with this man."

He went again into the inn, and asked if no competent driver would put a small carriage without wheels on to a sledge, and make the descent with him at once. He offered double pay. Some one with an empty convey-

ance on its return journey from Italy seemed willing.

"The weather is better," said Greyling, "and I am sick of waiting for this slow-coach, the conductor. I have pressing business."

"Yes," answered the charioteer from Altdorf, after due consideration ; "I will take you."

"Very good, Greyling ; very good," said Mr. Byng, coming up to his friend : "I know it is useless to try to dissuade you. But don't expect me to join you, for you know I am a bit of a coward. One word as to your course of action."

"What then ?"

"Do nothing, I entreat you, but observe—*observe*—if you should really get to Lucerne before me. I expect, however, that you will find that the boat at Fluellen must wait for the diligence, so that we shall after all arrive together. How I wish I could persuade you to stay here !"

"Byng, my dear fellow," said Greyling, getting into the carriage, "though I am by no

means an emotional man, I am subject to occasional irritation. I am wholly unaccustomed to delay. I am a Queen's Messenger, remember. This indefinite waiting would irritate me exceedingly, and it will be well for me to arrive at Lucerne in the calmest frame of mind. I shall be the better judge of Mrs. Greyling's fault. It touches my honour, but as far as she is concerned I wish to be cool."

"Certainly, certainly."

"There *may* be some extenuating circumstances, though it is hard to believe it. As for the paramour, there is no need for consideration. I shall shoot him like a dog, Byng. Good-bye! See you at the inn you named."

He was off, and it was no longer snowing.

CHAPTER XVI.

WHEN the conductor of the diligence saw that it had ceased to snow, he made preparations for departure, but before he could start, with team and travellers under his charge, there came another storm. At length this abated and the journey was continued. Andermatt was the next halting-place.

At Andermatt a crowd of villagers stood at their doors, in the piercing cold, or clustered round the post-house. Of what were they talking? Byng, on stepping out of the diligence, was accosted by a woman who spoke English—Byng was ignorant of German—and asked if he were the gentleman whose friend had travelled on in front of him.

“Certainly. Yes. What then?”

"Then the English gentleman has very much hurt himself. An accident."

"Gracious Heaven! What accident?"

"He was just leaving Andermatt—he was only thirty yards from this point—when he was overturned: thrown out of the carriage. He struck his head against a stone, almost covered with snow. The driver says he *would* be driven fast. It makes me sorry. If you could understand German, I could perhaps explain better. Ah, you cannot! *Soh!* Well, this is what must happen if English people will not believe what say the conductors. Who is to know, if not the conductors, when a road is safe! *Ach, Gott!*—the gentleman is killed!"

Byng turned pale. There were others to give him information. It was true. Where was his friend? Lying upstairs at the inn. In what room?

"Here. Let him go up. Beloved Heaven! Make way for the gentleman!"

Yes, it was true. There lay the corpse of Edwin Greyling, not yet cold. They had

washed the blood from his face. It had streamed from the temples, reddening his collar and shirt, staining his coat. He had been too much stunned for pain, and life had ceased while he was still unconscious.

It was too much for Greville Byng, and no wonder that it was.

"Here! a chair for the gentleman! *Eau de Vie!* Not so much noise, pray! *Hier ist Wasser.* *Soh!* A little colour has come back to his face. . . . You are better."

Byng, when he had sufficiently recovered from the shock, ascertained that the diligence was going on. It was clear that he must stay. He consulted with the country doctor, and decided to remain at the inn.

Three days afterwards, all was over—it was as if the accident were already forgotten. Byng had sent a telegram to Milner and Parchby, the solicitors to the deceased gentleman. Mr. Parchby, after communicating to the Foreign Office the news that one of the Queen's Messengers had died at Andermatt,

had himself travelled thither from London, had had all needful communication with Mr. Greville Byng, and had started on his return journey with that which undertakers, in their ghastly talk, are wont to describe as the "remains." Another Messenger had rapidly arrived from Downing Street, and had taken charge of all official documents.

Having stayed in Andermatt as long as the circumstances of the case required, Mr. Byng prepared to leave. He had explained to Mr. Parchby the reason for the will which was made at Milan, and Mr. Parchby possessed, in Mrs. Greyling's letters to her husband,—letters which were now in his keeping—ample proofs of her deceit, always supposing that it was, indeed, as Byng declared, Mrs. Greyling who was living with the English painter at Lucerne. This, though he was Mr. Byng's own legal adviser, Mr. Parchby had as a professional man no right to assume; but as a private individual, naturally enough, he did not doubt it. Still, in his professional capacity he felt bound to be

certain. Accordingly he assured himself, during his six hours' stay in Lucerne on the way back to London, that the Englishwoman staying at the *land-haus* on the Seeburg road was no other than the widow of his late client. Then he proceeded on his journey. When in town he would consult with his partner, and would probably send to Mrs. Greyling some formal intimation of her husband's death. Meanwhile, a letter written during the few hours' stay at Lucerne had empowered Greville Byng to give an account of the accident.

Mrs. Greyling now rarely accompanied Paul Warner in the long walks during which with the intensity of an artist's enthusiasm and the freshness of a child's delight he looked upon the beauty which Nature has lavished round that lake of the Four Forest Cantons. In hourly expectation of a telegram announcing her husband's arrival, she was secretly cultivating the seeds of discord which springing up rapidly should yield to Warner their early and bitter fruit. She affected less interest in

the art for which he lived, and bestowed on him less personal tenderness. It was too soon to withdraw altogether the tokens of her demonstrative admiration and self-seeking regard; but she was adroitly loosening the bonds which held him to her, and at a given moment she could cast him adrift.

Under such circumstances it was quite natural that Greville Byng should find her alone in the house, and that his interview with her should be perfectly undisturbed. On arriving at Lucerne he alighted at the inn which he had long ago selected. He had some talk with the landlord—to whom he had previously referred Mr. Parchby—and he ordered a lunch to fortify himself for his mission to the widow of his friend.

“Poor Greyling!” said Mr. Byng to the landlord, as the host stood beside him while he lingered over his wine. “We were to have met here before he sought the vengeance upon Warner which I am sure he would have had. Poor Greyling! So resolute, I assure you,

and of such an even temperament! I remember our dinner together at Milan. He was admirably calm. I am glad that the last dinner he ever ate was on the whole a satisfactory one."

Banishing these reflections, which, though dashed with resignation, were in the main melancholy, Greville Byng repaired to the little country-house, and was admitted to the presence of Mrs. Greyling. She did not dare to refuse to see him, astonished though she was to receive his visit.

"I sent in my card," said he to the lady who lounged in the small drawing-room, "but I fear this formality was useless. My name is scarcely likely to be known to you."

"Oh, yes!" answered the widow of his friend. "I know it well. My husband has often mentioned you to me, and I believe that I once had the pleasure of seeing you."

Did she think she was still undiscovered? What *rôle* was she assuming? Did she really hope to persuade him that her life was guileless,

her reputation untarnished ? These were questions which Greville Byng asked himself in curiosity and amazement.

She begged him to sit. He did so, and then introduced the subject with little prelude.

“When I was shown in, a few minutes ago, Mrs. Greyling, it is hardly likely you imagined my call to be one of ceremony.”

For a moment she hesitated : then answered, —“ I was of course quite ignorant of the reason of your call ; but that a friend of my husband’s, knowing this to be my temporary resting-place, should call on me here, does not seem strange to me at all. Not that I have many callers, here. Indeed, for the first instant after getting your card, and before I did remember the name, I fancied you might possibly be seeking the gentleman who occupies a part of this little house—Mr. Warner, the English painter.”

She was playing a desperate game ; but if all were lost already, nothing more could be lost by boldness. If, on the other hand, all were not lost, boldness would serve her better than

timidity. She reasoned to herself that if this man knew all, she could not make her own position worse by the effrontery of seeming innocent; while, if as yet he guessed nothing, or were merely suspicious, the bolder her behaviour the more likely was he to think that all was right. But her doubts as to Mr. Byng's view of the matter were speedily ended.

"No, I am not here," he rejoined, "on a call of friendship. I am Mr. Greyling's friend, it is true. But you do not appear to have all your friends in common. 'Mr. Warner, the English painter,' for example, is a gentleman of whom Greyling perhaps never heard."

She was going to speak, but rising for the time in tone and conduct above the easy level of his every-day life, Byng looked at her with the contempt that sometimes quells those upon whom anger and indignation are lost. He waved his hand for silence, and she held her peace while he still spoke.

"That need not in the least interrupt your intimacy. On the contrary, there is every

reason for the intimacy to be continued so long as you may think proper. An impediment is removed. An encumbrance has ceased to exist. You will learn with interest that my friend is dead."

"Spare me! God spare me!" cried Mrs. Greyling, striking her hands to her brow, and then bending her head over her lap, and rocking to and fro as if crushed by the news thus broken to her.

Byng looked on, with lips apart and eyes wide open. He could not quite understand. He was almost sorry, almost ashamed. He had fulfilled his task too brutally.

"Spare me, spare me; wretched thing that I am!"

Her voice was scarcely other than a low moan.

"I loathe myself," she murmured, with still averted face and downcast head. Then her head sank lower yet, and Byng heard her piercing whisper, like a whisper on the stage, but very natural, "*I loathe myself!*"

He could do nothing, but he was not left long in embarrassment. Mrs. Greyling raised herself, leaned back in her chair, and, with her eyes shaded by her hand, spoke more coolly.

"When was this? Tell me. You were very cruel; but you had a right to be. Tell me in any way—I must know all. . . . Edwin! Edwin!"

"Is she a penitent sinner or a born actress?" asked Byng of himself. "Confound me if I dare to say!"

Then he spoke very quietly, and almost soothingly.

"This is painful for both of us. Of course it must be painful to you. Remember that it is also so to me. It always touches a man to see a woman suffer."

"Please continue. I can bear anything, for there can be nothing worse than what you have told me."

"I shall have to fall still lower in your opinion," said Greville Byng, with a touch of

vanity. He was moved by beauty, and especially by beauty in distress.

“I am answerable,” he continued, “for part of what has happened, though I happily do not hold myself responsible for poor Greyling’s death. I remarked you at Nice as the wife of a friend, and in making a trivial enquiry I found that there was some mystery about you. Failing for the instant to recall your name, I made the discovery that your name was to be kept a secret.”

“They lied,” said Mrs. Greyling, with a gesture of indignation. “From my husband and from my husband’s friends there was to be no secret at all. It was only from this—this man. You know of whom I speak. He was persecuting me. I was trying to elude him. Only think, that he should have brought me to this!”

“My duty under the circumstances,” Mr. Byng resumed, “was exceedingly difficult and distressing. I was obliged, you perceive, to acquaint my friend with whatever serious

suspicious might arise in my mind. Now it has been an unfortunate hobby of mine to trace mysteries to their source. I did not imagine, when I began to trace this, that it was a very grave affair; but when I found that it was, what could I do but be loyal to my friend? You see I could not be said to know you personally. *You* had not confided in me. My duty therefore, though extremely distressing, was unfortunately pretty plain. I was bound to follow the thing up, and to let my friend know what I had discovered."

He paused for a moment.

"I do not blame you: I don't blame you at all," said Mrs. Greyling. "You did quite right, if I am any judge of right . . . What happened?"

"I was obliged to meet our poor friend at Ancona," Byng continued, "and to tell him you had left for Lucerne, with the artist who had been able to effect your—your——"

"Ruin," whispered the lady, her eyes still shaded by her hand.

“Greyling received the information in a way one can’t condemn. The thing did not only affect his happiness, but, as he said, it touched his honour. He was what any honest man would be—indignant with the seducer, and full of consideration for the unhappy victim. He spoke of you in a manner that did infinite credit to his judgment and his kind feeling.”

“Ah!” murmured the widow. “Yes. He was always good to me. I was wicked to doubt his affection. I fancied him cold.”

“Greyling was not demonstrative ; but upon my honour I believe he was sincerely attached to you.”

“He was. He was indeed. Why was I ever persuaded that it was otherwise!”

“He was anxious to know the whole truth at once, and with this object, would not pause on his journey hither. We came rapidly through Bologna and Milan. We only dined once at the latter place. On the St. Gothard, the difficulties of travelling at this period of the year are great, as you may yourself have

experienced. Sometimes they are *very* great. Our journey was most unfortunate."

Mrs. Greyling held a handkerchief to her eyes, and her head moved now and again convulsively.

"I need not linger," said Greville Byng, "over these harrowing details. Let me be very brief. Beyond Hospenthal the conductor of the diligence refused to proceed at once. But Greyling would not hear of delay. He chartered a conveyance on his own account. I remained with the rest of the passengers, being somewhat apprehensive of danger. Indeed I did my utmost, my very utmost, to dissuade Greyling from undertaking such a journey. It was of no use. When in due time I arrived with the diligence at Andermatt, I heard that an accident had occurred. Greyling had been overturned. I sought him in the bed-room of an inn to which he had been carried ; but I never saw him alive."

"Oh, my God!" exclaimed Mrs. Greyling. "It is too fearful : too awful. What a punish-

ment! And to think that all this should have been brought upon me by a foolish passion for one wicked man! Well, he has ruined me!"

"I had, under these circumstances, no course," Mr. Byng further said, "but to telegraph to the solicitors of our poor friend. Mr. Parchby, the junior member of the firm, was most promptly on the spot. He took charge of the—the——"

Mrs. Greyling again covered her face with her hands.

"He took charge of the body, and travelled on to London that Greyling might be buried in the North, with his family. Mr. Parchby empowered me to tell you of this sad occurrence. Here is his little note, written from Lucerne, on his way through this place, two days ago. Please read it."

She did so.

"You see," Byng continued, "it merely does that which I assured you it did. It empowers me to bear this very melancholy message—sends me on a mission which is, I do

assure you, fraught with very keen pain to me. Allow me, Mrs. Greyling, to offer you sincere sympathy. Perhaps this unhappy step may yet be atoned for."

"Only in one way," answered the widow slowly, and really with a view to "sound" Mr. Byng on a subject of great interest to her. "I cannot make public reparation for this unhappy step, with this miserable man, but I can make it in the sight of my poor husband's friends. Yes," she continued, in an access of self-sacrifice, "I decline to avail myself of the money which will be mine by Mr. Greyling's will. At the most, I shall only take a part of it. With the rest I will endow some charitable institution—why not a penitentiary for my fallen sisters? My conduct has, alas! set an insufficient example to them. One should be *always* on one's guard: not *often*."

"Unfortunately," said Greville Byng, with momentary insight, "such an excellent appropriation of superfluous property is, I fear, out of the question."

"Yes?" said Mrs. Greyling, interrogatively, and with just restrained impatience.

"Our poor friend," continued the missionary of evil tidings; "has made a different disposition of his property. His niece inherits it—a young lady lately married, I think; but I do not know, and do not care to know, about her: this word with you is my last on the subject: I shall travel in Spain to forget it all. Excuse this digression into personal matters, though. I am flying off at a tangent. This new will I mentioned, this will made by our friend at Milan, with every legal precaution, renders null the will to which you alluded, and by which, indeed, you would have been the recipient of nearly all he possessed."

"Ah! Ah, indeed! He has anticipated my own feelings. I would not have it otherwise. I should after all have been too proud to touch any of his money. I could not have so far humiliated myself, even if pressed by necessity. Still less, you know, could I so humiliate myself in my actual circumstances,

enjoying, as I do, a settlement made on me by my first husband. Good-bye, good-bye. Thank you very warmly"—they had both risen, and she was pressing his hand—"thank you heartily for the considerate manner in which you broke to me the news of Edwin's death."

"Very clumsily, I fear. Good morning."

"One word more. The man who has ruined me will not linger here, you may be sure. He is of another nature. I shall stay here alone, in retirement. Be my confidant! Did not Guinevere, in 'the little house at Amesbury,' wear out by fasts and prayer

'The sombre close of that voluptuous day
Which wrought the ruin of her lord the king?'

This talk has done me so much good. You have been *so* kind to me."

And with this last remark their conference ended.

"I might have suspected that," said the widow to herself, when Byng had gone. "Thank Heaven I do not need his money! But it is

insufferably vexatious and stupid. Why should he have been so impatient—poor man!—since he never violently cared for me? As for Byng — infamous mischief-maker! pudding - faced scoundrel!—I may meet him again some day.”

CHAPTER XVII.

Now that Mrs. Greyling had nothing to gain by Paul Warner's departure, she saw no reason why it should be hastened. He was clever, and she liked clever men. He was handsome, and she liked men who were handsome. He admired her, and she liked admiration. He thought he loved her, and she liked to play with love.

There seemed at first no reason to tell him of what had befallen her husband; but on reconsideration it occurred to her that misfortune is the parent of pity. Warner might feel that he had done her an injury, and this would bind him to her as long as she desired him to be bound. And indeed it was true that he had brought a calamity upon her, or she upon herself

through him. For if it is not a misfortune to lose a husband, it is at all events a misfortune to lose his bequests.

- She behaved for a few days just as she usually did; telling Warner nothing, but purposing to tell him soon. Doubtless she would receive from Mr. Greyling's lawyers an authoritative intimation of his death and of the disposal of his property. That would be the time to let Warner know of the mischief that had been caused. If he were told before, she would have to invent an excuse for not speaking to him of the visit of Byng. It was better that the lawyer's letter should break the news to him, for it would seem to break it to her also.

The document came as soon as it was expected. It was brief, but terribly to the point. It told of Greyling's death, while he was hurrying to discover what he believed to be his wife's infidelity, and it mentioned that his fortune was willed away to his niece.

The *haus-knecht* fetched the letters every

afternoon from the post-office in the town. When he arrived with that unwelcome letter from Messrs. Milner and Parchby, Warner was in the smaller drawing-room, looking over some sketches, and surrounded by loose sheets of paper, pencils, a palette and brushes, oil, and paint-smeared scraps of calico—the implements and accessories of his work. Mrs. Greyling was in the drawing-room proper, meditating over the unturned pages of a book that lay in her lap. Having read the letter, she quickly decided what to do. She stepped rapidly, with downcast head, into the adjoining room, and held out to Warner the open sheet.

“What is this?” said Paul, looking up.
“You are troubled!”

“Yes,” she answered, hesitatingly, but continuing after a minute’s pause and a look of contrition that would have done something towards establishing the reputation of an actress. “I have been very wicked. It has come at last, and it is more than I could bear without you. And you will think I have

been horribly deceitful while I *longed* to tell you. Paul! Paul! I am full of faults, but my chief one is that I—that I love you!”

She was rushing away. He spoke and held out his arm to stop her, but it was useless. She was gone, and he sat down on his painting stool to read in wonder and fright the letter she had brought him.

His eye caught first the name of the man of whom he had more than once sought to know something: the name of his wife's uncle. He read the note with that name almost sounding in his ears. “Greyling, Greyling!” muttered he: “I am face to face with *facts* about him at last.” This was the man, and he was dead, and it was his wife who was under that roof. Edwin Greyling, whom he had puzzled about, whom he had thought of seeking, had died while seeking *him*!

His thoughts rushed back to Canterbury. He remembered the winter's afternoon, the Kentish city and its ancient hostelry, as they had appeared to him the year before, upon his

wedding journey. He saw the old-fashioned sitting-room, the blazing fire, the tea things, and *The Times* with its advertisement of Greyling's marriage. He saw—it was imagination, but he winced at the sight—his wife, happy and beautiful and young, moving about the room with delicate thoughtfulness to do him service. And it was to her that there came this fortune of Greyling's—left her not because her uncle cared for her, not even because he knew her, but because her uncle's wife was her husband's mistress. He, at all events, could never touch that money. For him it was stained for ever. A stronger barrier than before now divided him from his wife.

With what result? That he might live still longer with a woman who had first beguiled and then deceived him? Could Barbara Greyling be to him in the future what Dolores Burton had been to him in the past? But they were one. Was not Dolores the same?

Just then he heard in the adjoining room, her stifled choking sobs. It was not instantly

that the feeling of repulsion from her left him, for he, who was deceiving his wife at that moment, was honestly disgusted that Barbara Greyling should have deceived her lover. Soon he remembered her words to him but a few minutes ago, and was inclined to hope she would gladly have told him all. Then it occurred to him that at the first he had not been quite frank with her. But the thing touched his pride. Pity came next. She had lost reputation, she had lost wealth, and all for him. Surely she must have loved him well to have risked so greatly. Surely one who had dared so much without hesitation, who had given so much to gain only him, who in losing had thought first of him and had regretted first her own concealments from him—surely such a woman might demand some return of sacrifice, some proof of a love that would last. She had demanded none.

And now she stood at the door with curled shoulders and averted head: a serpentine beauty whose very presence was a peril. It was a strange fascination.

Then he had pity on himself, and would not chase away the danger that he loved.

"Poor Dolores!" thought Warner. "She has deceived me, it is true, and she has deceived her husband. It is not a light fault. But she deceived me only because she loves me, and is devoted to me; and as to her husband, who knows how he neglected her? Imagine a man who leaves such a woman, and starts for Asia, when there is no earthly need for him to be a Queen's Messenger at all! He could only return when he suspected her—he had done nothing to guard her."

"Paul," said Mrs. Greyling, coming in to him, while he still sat moodily on his painting-stool. "Paul, Paul, have I not been dreadful? Can you ever look at me again?"

He rose. He paused a minute, then lifted up her downcast face. "I am looking at you now, Dolores. (You are still Dolores to me.) It is a sad, sad story for us all. You were more sinned against than sinning."

CHAPTER XVIII.

THERE was probably no one in all London to whom the long winter had been more dreary than it had been to Madeleine. The poor have always some companionship. In their worst times, as in their best, it is their habit to be comrades. They suffer much, but they suffer it together. Madeleine was alone. Those whose dearest friends are dead cherish at least some happy and satisfied recollection of them. The churchyard, while recalling grief, suggests consolation.

Such thoughts struck Madeleine now and again as the weary weeks followed each other and there seemed no sign of her husband's return. Thus far he had not come, and when he came would he not come unwillingly?

But she tried to banish these thoughts, and succeeded better than many a woman could have done. It was not that she had little sadness : it was that she had little selfishness. She was devoted. She had given herself away, and given herself unconditionally. She had no wish to brood over her wrongs. Chiefly alone during that long winter, speaking mainly to her servants and to the assistants of tradespeople—for Mrs. Hassell had fancied herself unwelcome, and Kate, for some reason as yet unknown, maintained an unbroken silence—it did not occur to Madeleine that her husband could be at all seriously reproached for his neglect. Often weary, she as often forgot the cause of her weariness. Often sick of delay, she as often ignored the wrongfulness of that delay, and remembered only its pain. She had not in a high degree the power of intellect : she had in the very highest, the power of affection.

This was a gift which Warner had recognised, but he had not understood its use. He had not made of her, and he had not rightly

tried to make, what a wiser husband would have succeeded in making. He had been impatient because she was slow, and then she was slower because he was impatient. She had lacked the healthy enthusiasm which needs no prompting, and he had met her deficiency with the requirements which clever men put forward in the belief that what is easy to them can be difficult to no one. Yet all the while, in wish, if not in fact,—and never more sincerely than through that long and lonely winter—Madeleine could have applied to herself the words in which the lover of Hero told his devotion :

My love is thine : teach it but how,
And thou shalt see how apt it is to learn
Any hard lesson that may do thee good.

But what lesson could Madeleine learn, save the lesson of patience, which she almost knew before ? Some things she did learn, however, without knowing it; but they were things which in the future might benefit herself more than the man whom she most sought to benefit. The strength of self-reliance began to rise in her

nature : only in little things, and very waveringly, and yet in a way that would have been seen to promise something for the future, had any one been there to be the kindly witness of that promise. Of what did it avail at a time when, to her own knowledge, she had lost much of her happiness and usefulness? What nascent qualities could alter her past ; what progress could brighten the days that were to come ?

She waited for Paul's return with sadness, it is true, but with no sign of desperation. This was because of the gentleness which had mixed at every moment with the intensity of her love. It was scarcely passion that had moved her at any time : for good and for evil she seemed insensible to its touch. Instead of that, she was possessed by devotedness which knew no bounds : devotedness not less unreasoning perhaps than passion itself, but certainly less liable to change. No neglect could crush, no jealousy could poison it.

Often her affection resembled a daughter's

—it was a clinging attachment mixed with respect for a superior power she could not emulate. Often too, though quite unconsciously, it resembled a mother's tenderness; but when so, only the tenderness of a mother whose little range of thought and life renders valueless the protection she would throw over the gifted wayward child beyond her reach.

In a different sense, and with a better result than attended any other of her efforts, Madeleine at last did motherly service to some who were grateful for her care. Late in the winter, she began to visit a hospital for children. The wife of the blind writer, Wilfrid Harris, hearing incidentally of her loneliness, had called upon her. She had done so nominally to be allowed to see whatever happened to remain in the studio which her husband had visited with Ringley, but really to see if some way might not be found to draw the thoughts of Madeleine from her own troubles; for Edith Harris, though she said nothing, could not but believe

the worst from Warner's absence. She was herself accustomed to visit this children's hospital, which had for her a certain charm mixed with its sadness of suffering, and her visits there were scarcely other than a recreation to her amidst the sterner work she did in lessening, in her own wise original mode, some portion of the burthen which life in London casts upon our poor. She took Madeleine with her to the old quaint house in a half-deserted quarter of the town, and the painter's wife became interested—and strongly too—in the occupants of those small beds and ancient chambers.

So Madeleine went there often, and got to know the children well. There were children of all sorts ; some hard and unthankful, some restless and irritable, some cheerful in their recovery, and some patient in their long and wearing pain. It did her good to think of sufferings other than her own, and to do something to diminish them ; and it did good too to the children to see her face, sweet and kind—still bright with the

brightness of a pure youth, if not with that of a personal joy—as she passed from white bedside to white bedside, through the long hospital-array.

Sometimes when she returned from the great sick-nursery she had visited, and sat alone by the studio-fire—for she chose that room habitually—in the long hours of the February evenings, she wondered, as her thin hands deftly fashioned small garments not for herself, what would be the future of her child, if a child were born to her, as now she hoped. Would the child be strong, and would it thrive in a reunited house, under a father's guidance as well as a mother's care? Would it be with her alone?—her only solace in a separation never to end. Or would it never thrive at all, as happier children born in happier homes, but pine and waste, as some of those who now lay still upon their hospital beds, in sickness near to death? These were thoughts on which she brooded variously in her varying moods. Now she dwelt on them with hope and con-

fidence, and now she flung them from her with a shudder of dread.

There came to her, at the proper time, the news of her fortune. It devolved upon Mr. Milner, who was not only lawyer but executor, to tell her of it. She did not communicate the fact to her husband. The reader knows that he knew it already : Madeleine only thought it possible that he might be informed, and she was resolved that no intimation should proceed from her, lest it should seem like an unworthy effort to bring him back.

She knew little of money matters, and the only time they had ever troubled her at all was when after her father's death she had vainly sought a satisfactory home. But this had not lasted long. Paul had stepped in, with his love that had protected her, and with the means to remove all inconvenience which lack of money could cause. While they had lived together, he had managed everything, and from the time of his departure, some one in the City—whose name the poor girl scarcely knew—had sent her, by

Paul's instructions, fifty pounds a month. Besides this, Paul had put some money in her desk the day he had left her. She had never known what it was to want it.

The news of her great possessions—for great they seemed to her, since they amounted to thirty thousand pounds—gave her no pleasure. Had she been penniless and then received this sum, it would have seemed to her that she had been providentially relieved ; but as it was, this money was of no use to her, and she never thought that any child of hers—if child there came—could need it. Paul was rich and she was simple. Her wants were few. She did not live on luxury : she lived upon affection—upon the love she gave, if not upon the love which she received. Once it occurred to her that the fortune might be turned to a good use, and that if it were in her power to dispose of it, to that use it should be quickly applied. With half of it she would build a second children's hospital ; and with the other half she would build, amongst the poor, a trim large

school and a great solemn church, like that whose daily services she sometimes heard in going to or coming from her work among the children.

This was a happy dream, that lightened now and then an hour's sorrow. But it never went further. It was not in her nature to take the initiative strongly. She made no enquiries, but lived on in her old still way—a life of patient work and patient waiting.

CHAPTER XIX.

BEFORE the end of April the sun bursts fitfully upon Lucerne with more than the heat of an English July. The roads glare dry and dusty; the houses are of a dazzling white. But previous rain has quickened the vegetation, and trees and grass look bright and fresh. From every straggling hedge and crannied wall facing the south, the lizards dart, then pause; their green and brown being sometimes lost to view amidst the leaves of wayside plants and the upturned dark earth. In the full noontide the blue and far-off sky, flecked with white cloudlets, is mirrored in the lake, while at evening the still waters get shades of warm grey and of tender rose from the sunlit mountains and the glowing west.

The constant sight of these things does not tire a painter. Each fresh combination of hue and outline is a new picture, calling to mind the limitless and perfect beauty which no single hand can seize. To the heart which feels it there is brought the regret which is not wholly bitter, because to the sense of present failure there is joined the sense of infinity.

In the long walks he took about Lucerne, Warner had time, and opportunity too, to think gravely of his life, and standing aside for a space from the confused array of passion and effort and wrong, to survey its course and plan its future. Nature was there to help him with her quiet ministrations. The gathering shadows of every sunset view, from the hill of the Three Lindens, reminded him of days that were gone and wasted, but whose shadows had not passed ; while the clear crisp air of every morning, bracing his physical frame, seemed a summons to serious work. We are swift to recognize these natural lessons, and slow to act upon them.

It was Mrs. Greyling's pleasure, during the long and glorious afternoons, to sun herself in the verandah, with a light lace shawl thrown over her head, and in her hand a tainted novel, which Warner mildly termed "sensational." Now and again, however, she would request the painter to take her for a drive to Küssnacht or a neighbouring village, and sometimes she would row about the lake, or, more properly speaking, be paddled, in the little boat generally moored in the boat-house at the garden's end. This paddling was with two oars—a way peculiar to the place. The *haus-knecht* used the boat every morning to take the cook up the broad river into Lucerne, where it was her business to choose the day's fare, buying meat and vegetables at the open air market. She brought them back, safe and cool, under the awning; stepped on shore, and then, basket laden, mounted the steep garden-path to the villa. Later in the day the *haus-knecht* started again. Ten minutes' rapid paddling—and he could paddle very rapidly if he chose—

enabled him to reach the steps beyond the Chapel-bridge, nearly under the Jesuits' church, and close to the flat floating trays from which in the full sunlight the women bare-armed bent to wash clothes in the blue Reuss. He moored his light craft to the quay-wall, and walked to the post-office for letters. Generally there were none, but he was always sent to see, and his arrival was awaited with various kinds of interest by the strange couple who from the low-roofed white verandah watched the boat's passage over the quiet waters.

Warner learned to manage this summer boat himself, and in it sometimes at early morning, before Mrs. Greyling had appeared, he crossed the lake—here very narrow, ere it feeds the Reuss—and drifted down the river to a stopping-place at its side. Here he would land, and, prompted by a curiosity which if idle was at least respectful, would go to matins at the old Franciscan church, down a long street which the tall houses shaded. Monks from the monastery hard by, and scholars, and poor

people on their way to work, joined in the short prayers that began their day. It made a picture, which Warner did not fail to notice.

One April afternoon, before it was yet time for the house-boy to row into the town to see for letters, Mrs. Greyling proposed to Warner that they themselves should go Lucerne-wards in the boat ; she sitting in the centre, under the white awning, and her *bon ami* standing almost in the stern to paddle. He consented, for he was in the mood to pay her little chivalrous attentions. Had she not lost much through her association with him ?

“She has sacrificed much to me, and would doubtless sacrifice more. Don’t I owe her anything in return ?” So he reasoned, despite the wrong he had done to Madeleine. But his wife, in whatever else she failed, did not fail in tenderness, in simplicity, in love. If she suffered, she forgave. He was quite sure of that. Could she then be miserable ? Paul Warner hardly thought it. There are some of us, be it observed, who when we say that goodness is its

own reward consider ourselves thereby excused from giving it any other.

"It will be like Venice," Mrs. Greyling said, wishing to be pleased.

"A feeble reminiscence," Warner answered.

"Shall I sing to my gondolier?" she asked, when the boat was pushed from the shore.

"Sing? Certainly."

She warbled, softly enough, the shepherd-boy's song from *Mireille*: that which Gounod founded on a Provençal air, suiting well the Provençal story. Twice she sang, and was silent as the small craft approached the town. Paul bent forwards to his task with the two oars, and the boat was pushed on through the glistening water.

"Where are we going?" the oarsman asked, after some rapid strokes.

"You are tired of rowing," said Barbara. "Row more slowly."

"Why you speak as if a man had no muscle," said Paul, with a smile. He was a little proud of his physique. Soon he con-

tinued : "You look cold. Why not put that shawl on? Do put it on to set me at rest."

"I must sit upon something," Barbara answered. "No, I cannot spare the shawl for my shoulders."

"Then I tell you what—I shall put you out of the boat. That is my ultimatum."

"Don't, don't!" she exclaimed. "It is nothing. You could soon row us home, for the matter of that."

"But you want to get something in the town, and we were to have gone together. I can land you there much sooner than at the villa, too. The best thing is to do your errand, and walk home briskly. I will row back alone, and then I will walk towards the town to meet you on the way. Come: this is what you must do."

"I will be very obedient," she replied.

In a couple of minutes they had reached the steps, and Mrs. Greyling was alighting.

"I will put on the shawl now," she said, "and leave this little Roman scarf with you."

With me, 'twould be a nuisance. But I prize it very much : the shade is uncommon, so take care of it. Here," she continued, tying it on to one of the four slight iron props which supported the awning : "these are my colours, and yours too, nailed to the mast. Good-bye for the present. Stick to your colours, mind. Bring me back my flag. Seriously, though, take care of the thing, because I value it, and because you value me."

"Good."

"*Au revoir !*" she said, smilingly, kissing her hand, as she reached the tree-shaded walk which skirts the water, and as he turned lake-wards again.

There was a steamer from Fluellen steering towards the quay, and Warner questioned whether he would hug the southern shore all the way back to the villa, and so avoid the approaching packet, or whether he would strike out into the lake, crossing, before she came, the path that would be hers. It only wanted hard rowing to cross twice. It was almost sure

to succeed. But if it did not, it would be easy up to the last moment to draw back. It would be easy to cross once, to wait leisurely on the other side till she passed, and then to traverse her track where the water, stirred by her wheels, heaved gently far behind her.

"Tired!" said Warner to himself, with something of scorn—and justifiably, too, for if he were not an athlete, he was not a lily-handed and powerless exquisite—"Tired! A stiff pull will do me good!" So he worked lustily, and crossed the steamer's future path at a point from which she was several minutes distant. "There!" thought Paul. "A good thing done very soon. And now another. I cannot wait here till she's passed." He would cross again further down the lake—nearer the villa, towards which he would then row. So further down the lake he changed his course to cross again. He succeeded in doing so before the packet approached, and now, with slackened speed, he was making for the boat-house at the bottom of the garden.

The wind, the motion—one or both—had loosened the scarf which Mrs. Greyling had perhaps not even at first securely fastened to the thin iron rod which, with three others, kept the awning up. Paul noticed this, and moved to reach the thing, but before his hand could grasp it, it was gone, and lay by the boatside, on the waves which would bear it away. Warner, on the impulse of the moment, bent forwards : had he thought, he would have brought the boat round to the scarf instead. But he had not time to think, and suffered for the want of it, since the boat's side dipped, and he lost his footing, and was next instant struggling in the water. The boat "gave," and righted herself as soon as he was thrown out. She drifted, though, some little way, before he could get in again ; and in the attempt to enter he pushed her from him more than once. But as he could swim he saw no cause for alarm, and eventually he succeeded in jumping up over the boat's bows — with hands pressed equally upon each side—and thus there was an

end of the adventure. He had saved the scarf, and had given proof of his chivalry. Full of honours, he landed at the garden's edge.

"She will be nearly home by this time," thought Warner, as he walked up from the shore. He would walk townwards to meet her. But before he had gone fifty paces he saw a drochska coming the other way. It was coming from Lucerne, and Mrs. Greyling nodded to him out of it. He made a sign to the driver, who stopped at once, and he opened the door and looked at Barbara.

"I was tired," she said—not noticing his condition for the minute — "so I took this carriage. It was better than overdoing myself!"

"Ah!" said Paul, rather disappointed that she had not walked and given him the opportunity of walking, too, to meet her. He gave her his hand now to descend, as they were so near home, and accompanied her to the villa door. It was a walk of only a couple of minutes, and Mrs. Greyling used the time to ask about his accident.

"Oh, it is nothing!" Warner said, replying to her anxious enquiry. "The boat gave a lurch, while I was reaching your flag—*que voici!*—that is all. Here I am, safe and sound, you see. It might have been worse, you will allow."

"How was it? How did it happen? Tell me the whole affair. Why was I not there!"

It did not perhaps occur to Paul that had the lady's professed wish been realized—had she been "there"—the difficulties would only have been greater. Grateful for what seemed to him friendly and even affectionate concern (and remember, many men are fools before the protestations of attractive women), Paul looked at her kindly and spoke to her with feeling. He repeated the story.

"We have but just escaped a tragedy," she said, laughing. "It is a comedy, instead. Now oblige me by changing your clothes. You look damp."

He obeyed, and came downstairs again in time for the six o'clock dinner.

"The evenings close in very cold," he said,

"and this thin white wine don't warm me. It is too early in the year, notwithstanding the sunshine and hot noons, for these detestable Swiss wines."

After dinner, Mrs. Greyling established herself in front of the little stove. Warner sat at the side, fingering the leaves of one of the great periodical Reviews—perhaps the *Deux Mondes*, perhaps the *Contemporaine*—which the light French people buy and read. At nine o'clock, the old cook sent in tea. Until lately it had been Mrs. Greyling's custom to make it, but now she had given up this little nightly worry.

"The tea is half cold, I say; and I am shivering and hot alternately. My throat is sore."

"What is it?" asked Mrs. Greyling. "Poor fellow, you shall be comforted! Here,"—she had rung the bell violently, and was now speaking to the servant who entered—"make us some fresh tea at once. Mr. Warner is unwell."

She lavished on him all her solicitude. She felt his pulse; she put her cool hand on his head; she looked him through and through, and was all that she could be to him.

"A little feverish attack," she said. "This comes of the damp clothes, you know. But cheer up, cheer up, there's a good fellow: you shall be well to-morrow."

She knew he could not be, but it was best, she thought, to say he would. Why should she frighten him?

"I shall go to bed," he said to her. "Don't trouble about me: I shall wake refreshed."

He left her, staggered to his room—his legs shook under him—and presently he was in bed, tossing in snatches of hot and broken sleep. "She was kind," he thought—and it was his last thought—"I am quite sure that she loves me."

Meanwhile Mrs. Greyling sat still in front of the stove in the salon, till the logs of wood, so little seen, burnt out completely. She had been wrapt in thought. Then, suddenly, she

rose, lighted her candle, and extinguished the lamp. Then she walked to her own room. The servants had gone to bed. There was no one outside the villa to notice by the light in Mrs. Greyling's chamber how far into the night she was about and moving. There was no one outside when in the early April dawn she stole down the broad stairs, and passing out of the hall, heard only the fountains' quiet plashing as the water trickled into its shallow basin of cold stone.

She wore a simple bonnet and a warm woollen shawl. She carried a box in one hand, and in the other a bag. The box was not larger than a jewel box, nor the bag than a dressing-bag.

There had fallen in the night some quiet steady rain, which had now ceased. It had moistened the gravel of the carriage drive, and the tiny glistening stones were crushed with a slight pleasant noise under the lady's light and rapid footfall. The damp poplars nodded slowly as she passed on. Before her, out of

the morning mist, rose gradually the walls and towers of Lucerne. The sky broke somewhat; an orange streak parting the grey.

On walked the early foot-passenger, through the suburban road, through the quaint streets, across the covered bridge; on through the further quarter of the town, which was now waking to its daily simple life. She turned in at the station-gate, not hurriedly, but boldly, and knew well whither she was bent. There was no person there whose business it was to watch her. Had there been twenty, the keenest eye among them all would not have witnessed her return; for thus, without one look back towards the still closed villa, without one thought of the man who tossed there in the restless sleep of surely-coming fever—unless it were a thought of wisely-planned escape—without a regret for any past, or a care for any present other than her own, the woman who had been Warner's friend in his false prosperity left him alone in his need.

CHAPTER XX.

FROM the station at Lucerne, upon the 21st of April, Mrs. Greyling, before entering the train which was to bear her to the German frontier at Basle, whence it was her intention to journey slowly on to Baden-Baden, had despatched a telegram addressed in Warner's name to Mr. Ringley in London. It was this:—

“I am ill. Come to me immediately, alone.”

To Warner, also, she had sent a line, written on the inside of an envelope, and she had commissioned a porter who looked trusty, and who was anxious for *trink-geld*, to take it to the villa in three hours' time, when the inmates would be beginning to wonder at her absence. This was the line:—

"You, Mr. Warner, have shown some disposition to leave me. I relieve you of the difficulty.

"DOLORES."

When Barbara Greyling had despatched these words, she persuaded herself that the painter was decidedly her debtor. The sharpness of the second message was compensated for by the kindness of the first. Then, with a light heart, she sped away. She cared not much for the necessary scantiness of her wardrobe—she could replenish it at Basle.

It was noon when Ringley received the telegram from Switzerland. He was just closing behind him his house door in Stanley Street, and preparing for his walk into central London—to the office of *The Morning Press*—when the bearer arrived, gave the message at once to the gentleman to whom it was addressed, and took from him the due acknowledgment hastily scrawled in pencil. The journalist was accustomed to get telegrams often, and the

receipt of this did not prevent his finishing the operation of buttoning his gloves as he walked along the pavement. Meanwhile the official envelope was lodged in his pocket, but in two minutes it was opened and the contents had been read.

Ringley's first impulse was to turn and re-enter the house, but a second thought quickly told him that he could consider the subject as effectually on his way to the office. Moreover, he was bound to go to the office, even if only to say when he arrived there that a personal matter of great importance must keep him absent for the next few days.

It did not at first look to him a genuine message. Its form appeared to him improbable, if not inexplicable. "Come immediately" was natural enough, but why "alone"? A woman's assistance in dangerous illness would be worth twice as much as his could be. Why then, in the name of common sense, exclude a woman from that sick room? Was the whole thing a hoax? Did some malicious person, whose crude attempt

at fame Ringley had thwarted, desire as a worthy revenge that the journalist should travel wearily and needlessly for thirty hours? It was hardly likely. Any such gentleman might find a better opportunity of honourable retaliation in criticising some piece of Ringley's work : especially if that work chanced to be good and could be represented as execrably bad.

The message then was probably a true one ; but did it come from Warner ? . He doubted it. It came perhaps from some one who had been authorised to despatch a summons, but who had never been authorised to add to that summons a request that the recipient would "come alone." Warner at all events never dictated those words. Ringley would not believe it of him. Clearly then it followed that in his action Ringley must disregard them—that he must do just that which he would have done had they not appeared at all upon the paper. Undoubtedly he would have gone to Warner's wife : not less undoubtedly must he go to her now. He came to this conclusion ere he had

reached the Strand, and was not slow to execute his resolve.

An interview with Mr. Mortimer Hobbs, the able editor of the morning paper, occupied hardly a quarter of an hour. At its close, Ringley had made arrangements which would enable him to be away a fortnight, should it prove to be necessary. Hobbs consented with much reluctance, for Ringley's articles were valuable; but if consent had not been given it is possible that Mr. Hobbs' esteemed contributor might for the future have taken his articles to another place. It was better, the editor reasoned, to put up with a fortnight's inconvenience than to allow Mr. Ringley to assert his independence to the real detriment of the journal.

At two o'clock Paul Warner's friend rang the little-used visitors' bell at Craven Hill, gave in his card, and was shewn at once into the presence of Madeleine. It was clear that she had just been or was now going out, for she wore a bonnet and gloves and a loose out-of

doors jacket. She looked tired, and stood on the hearth-rug, leaning her arm on the chimney-piece. She had only a minute before arrived from her children's hospital.

It was a difficult interview, for Ringley having been inclined to think as Warner thought before leaving England, had neglected to see her, and now felt it very awkward to speak to her of her husband. But he was kind at heart, and could show it at need. His neglect had arisen in part from misconception and in part from lack of time. He led an occupied life at the newspaper office and at the clubs. He heard the news from all, and gathered men's opinions; and now went, in furtherance of his professional work as much as for his pleasure, not only to the concerts and the theatres, but to dinners and assemblies all over that London world which begins near Portland Place and ends near Eaton Square.

There was some constraint in Madeleine's manner. "What does he know of Paul's absence?" she asked herself. "What can he

think of it?" But Ringley's unaffected kindness of look and tone put her more at her ease. He asked her first about herself, and then about the picture which Warner had sent home.

"It is a Theseus," Madeleine answered.

"What! He has not taken to sculpture?"

"No, indeed, Mr. Ringley. What made you think he had?"

"I thought at once of the Theseus in Bloomsbury—at the British Museum, I mean. You know the Elgin marbles."

"The Elgin? No. But I have heard of them."

"Well, what about Warner's picture? I want to see it. You know it by heart, Mrs. Warner, I'll be bound."

"It went to the Academy a day or two ago. Of course they will accept it. It will have a very good place on what Paul calls 'the line,' I should think. But I can't describe it to you well, though I like it with all my heart. Stay! I will read you a bit of Paul's

letter about it. An old letter, you know. I must go and find it."

It was so difficult to break the news that Ringley let her go; glad to avail himself of a few minutes' grace, yet aware that every minute might possibly make harder his task. Madeleine was back again directly with a packet of letters tied together by a thread. They were probably arranged according to their dates. At all events the young wife had no difficulty in finding the one she wanted. Her white thin fingers quickly drew it from the rest.

"Here, Mr. Ringley. It is only a line or two, but will give you a better idea than my description could. This:—'It is no good troubling you with the Greek story. Take Theseus, if you will, as you find him in my picture: a strong young man, resting in the possession of such strength. Some people will say there is nothing in it, and will complain of want of subject, absence of action. But I have not striven to make a full subject or to repre-

sent any dramatic action. It is simply Theseus : Theseus with nobody else. I wanted a suitable head with a suitable body ; a head not absorbing everything : a body not insignificant in comparison. The one has received as much attention as the other, just as it would have done—though with result ten thousand times greater—had the work been a statue and the worker one of the Greeks. I have modelled this figure with all possible care. It is not a thing which I should wish always to repeat, but it is, I hope'—ah ! there it ends. That is what he says. And yet," added Madeleine, " though I do like it immensely, it does not touch, it does not *touch*, that lovely *Mary in the House of John* !"

" I shall look out for the picture with the greatest interest ; but I must see the painter, Mrs. Warner, before I see his work."

" How ? " she asked, surprised.

" I have heard from him. His communication is not here, for I left it at the office. He wants to see me."

"Why?" urged Madeleine, who would have asked more questions instantly had not Ringley continued without pause.

"He is not well. I don't imagine he is very dangerously ill—I trust not, indeed—but it is certainly something more than a trivial indisposition. I thought it best to tell you at once, as I shall start this evening for Lucerne, by way of Calais, Paris, and Basle—the quickest route."

Madeleine, who was pale and violently trembling, said nothing for the moment: then, in an underbreath, and with great effort, "I shall go too."

"No, no," Ringley answered at once, "I really do not advise your doing so. You are not looking very strong—if I may put first what you will think a poor reason. And there is really, I think, no necessity."

The fact is, he had seen the difficulty. Who could tell, he thought, upon reflection, what might be the circumstances under which she would find Warner? The look of things was

very dubious. On the whole, was it wise for her to go? He scarcely thought so.

"What does he say?" asked the wife, hurriedly. "Tell me, please, exactly what is the message."

"He says," Ringley made answer, "in the message, 'I am ill. Come to me immediately.'"

"Then I shall go. There cannot be another word about it. I do not like to have to decide so strongly, and against your advice; but I cannot possibly help it. Mr. Ringley, I *must* go. You will take me with you."

"It is difficult to divide a wife from her husband, but I have told you that I see no necessity for any one but myself to go. Besides, the mere journey would knock you up. You do not look strong enough.—Oh, pardon me, you *really* do not look strong enough! On our arrival, we should have two patients, instead of one; for I must travel fast: work at the office will not allow me time to do otherwise. I have said my say, Mrs. Warner. I cannot add anything else, but that to the very best of my

ability I will—I will bring him back to you all right.”

“I know nothing of the continent. I don’t speak French : I only read it. I’m an ignorant helpless girl, who gives more trouble, many times, than she is worth. But after all, I am his wife. If you won’t take me with you, Mr. Ringley, I shall go alone.”

A minute’s pause. The journalist was calmly brushing his hat with his glove. Madeleine stood by, looking closely at him : stood there with flushed cheeks, open earnest eyes, and quivering eyelids. A hundred thoughts—and each an anxious thought—rushed through her brain. How was Paul ill ? How was it that he had not sent to her ? In a single lifetime there is not room for many moments such as these. They wear the body, like a year’s labour.

“Well,” answered Ringley, very quietly, “You must take the greatest care of yourself. I will call for you in a cab at five o’clock. We shall be in Paris to-morrow morning, and shall try to travel on without delay.”

She did not say a single "thank you ;" but took his hand impetuously, stepping forwards, and a flood of tears not wholly sorrowful—for was she not going, however strangely, to him she loved ?—gave relief to the strained excitement of that time.

Ringley then left the house immediately and made the best of his way to his own abode in Pimlico : there to prepare for the night's journey and the many days' absence. At five o'clock exactly he was again at Craven Hill, alighting from his cab, to give to Madeleine what help she might require.

But scarcely half-an-hour after he had left her, in the early afternoon, another visitor arrived with happier tidings.

"Mrs. Warner at home ?" asked a cheerful voice, when, in answer to a crisp, decided ring, the waiting-maid appeared at the door.

"Yes, miss." And the visitor walked in with confident step.

Kate Lemon came to Madeleine's seclusion from out of a busy world—a world that laughed

in prosperous activity and sunny leisure. She came into that place with the glow of health, the radiance of success. It would have seemed almost a cruelty, had she but known it, to strike in thus upon Madeleine, so profound a contrast. But she knew nothing, and when a troubled face met her in the studio, she could only wonder and surmise.

"Kate!" said Madeleine, kissing her with fervour.

"How is your husband?" asked the other, divining at once that some misfortune of his was the most likely thing to be the cause of her friend's trouble. "Is he ill then? What is it?"

"Ah!" answered Madeleine, sorrowfully. "You know so little about me now. I forgot. You did not know of his going away."

"When?"

"Oh, months ago! To study and paint abroad. He has stayed away longer than he intended to do, you understand. There was so much to see and do. He has sent me home one

picture for the Royal Academy, and I was hoping soon to see him—for he did mean to come soon, I am sure—when to-day, not an hour ago, I heard of his illness.”

“Did he write?” asked Kate.

“Mr. Ringley called to tell me. I expect Paul thought I should be too much upset and should not know what practical step to take. Therefore, he wrote—no, telegraphed—to Mr. Ringley, who is very kind, and will take me with him when he goes abroad to-night. Paul is at Lucerne. He was gradually working his way back to me, perhaps. . . . Kate, I must tell you all. Sometimes I think he was——”

“Was what?”

“Coming back to me gradually. At other times I think—Oh, how do I know what! I am afraid to think at all.”

“Poor Maddy!” said Kate, with her hand placed softly on her cousin’s bent head, and in her voice a sympathetic tone that told of added experience and of a nature more developed

than of yore. "I was busy, with work, and pleasure too. I thought of you often, and meant to write to you, over and over again. But we are so terribly occupied, and every night, though I am very well, I am so tired. But I was wrong to seem to neglect you. Forgive me, Maddy : I am so sorry for you."

"You didn't know I was alone," said Madeleine, with relief. "And I was very foolish. I ought to have told you everything ; only it was very difficult. You understand now how difficult it was."

The gentler nature rested in the strength of Kate's self-reliance ; and forgetting, with the prompt instinctive way of youth, her weary desolate winter and the new great trouble that had burst on her that day, Madeleine was happy for a moment in her friendship found again, and in the sympathy which drew a curtain to shut out all fear.

"Now tell me," she said—glad to throw off the thoughts of her own life—"what have you

been doing all these months? And how is Charley Hassell?"

"Ah, you heard of him from mother, one day when she came to see you!"

"Yes."

"He's very well, thanks—very well, indeed. He is to be a lawyer. We decided that together last autumn. So he is no longer a barrister's clerk. He is doing *very* well, but as for marrying—if you mean to ask about that—that must be long time to come, for his training costs a great deal, and we could never manage it but that my salary is good. You see, we were determined to get on together. He did so much for me, it is a pleasure to know that I can help him too, a little. Now about myself, Maddy. Before the end of my Scarborough engagement, I was ill, you know. Then I went to Manchester. I have got on wonderfully there: the manager is very fair, and the public—well, the public like me, I suppose. Bad taste, isn't it? At all events, I have been doing well, with a good salary."

"That's right," said Madeleine, who did not know whether 'a good salary' meant two pounds a week or twenty.

"Yesterday I came away to take a holiday, and before leaving I signed an agreement for the three months from the middle of May. Capital terms! Better than I ever expected till that *dear* Charley told me I had it in me, and should 'do.' Guess what they are?"

"I can't."

"Six pounds a week ; and, more than that, I have had an offer for a longer time in London. Before my holiday is over, and I go back to Manchester, I expect that I shall sign for this engagement too—to begin on the first of October, for six months certain, at seven pounds a week. There! You congratulate me. Not for my sake only ; but for Charley's. Remember, the better I do, the better is his chance of being a real lawyer in about four years. I am so happy, Maddy."

She forgot, for the instant, her cousin's trouble : then added, "I am so happy in my own

life. I shall be happier still—a great deal happier—if everything gets right with you.”

There was a little silence. That Kate was thinking was plain enough by the look of her fine clear face : a face so variable that only one instant after it had been alive in every feature with thoughts of the moment it could express abstracted and unbroken meditation. New and exciting work had stimulated faculties which were never dull, and through all Kate’s frame there beat the pulses of a quick and steady life. She was weak nowhere. The dark hair—brown and lustrous, waving and thick—the red mouth, the erect lithe figure, the arched and serviceable feet which miles of pavement did not tire, the very hands—rounded, firm of flesh, with well-knit wrists and supple and strong fingers—all told the story of her vigorous being. She had been ill, but could survive severe illness. She worked hard, and hard work was well for her.

Looking across at Madeleine’s large tired eyes and pale sweet face, shadowed lightly by

the gold hair that fell over the brow, Kate decided at once the thing upon which she had been reflecting, and began by offering her cousin help in getting ready for the journey which was to begin that night.

"You are going to Lucerne," she said, immediately afterwards. "With Mr. Ringley too. At what time do you leave here?"

"At five, Kate : that is in about two hours from now."

"Yes. Give me a scrap of paper, Madeleine. You can spare a servant to take a message for me. We can do without her help here, I'm sure."

Madeleine nodded acquiescence, and fetched Kate a sheet of paper. There were pens and ink on the table. Miss Lemon sat down at once and used her pen with easy rapidity. She did not write a pretty hand, but a hand that was characteristic. It was not fine Italian, nor was it exactly the regular modern round, but a modification of this latter, with little turns and twists, sharp bends and resolute but unflourished dashes, which were all her own.

This is what she wrote.

“ DEAR MOTHER,

“ PAUL WARNER, who has been away an age, is now ill at Lucerne, and I expect it is very serious, for Maddy starts this evening at five with his friend Mr. Ringley. With nobody else—think! I have taken the law into my own hands, mother dear, and mean to go with her. I really *must*.

“ Please send back directly by the servant only the very few things I shall be sure to require, and put up in an envelope for me the three five pound notes you’ll find in my new desk. The key is in my dressing-table drawer.

“ Good-bye, mother, for a fortnight. You know I can’t help it. Be sure and write *Poste Restante*, Lucerne. Explain to Charley at once, and say I’ll write to him the first moment I can. In great hurry,

“ Your loving

“ KATE.

“ P.S. Please telegraph at once from Notting

Hill, this message to Charley : 'See Kate at Charing Cross Station at half-past five to-night. She must go abroad with Mrs. Paul Warner.' "

The servant took this little note, and as soon as she had left the room Kate turned to Madeleine.

"That was a note for mother, containing something for Charley. I mean to go with you this evening, and so I wrote to say so."

"Oh !"

"Well, isn't it the most natural thing in the world ? Did you suppose, Miss Maddy—Oh, I beg your pardon !—did you suppose, Maddy dear, that I was going to let you go with only Mr. Ringley ?"

Madeleine said no word of thanks. She looked amazed at first, and then went up to Kate and kissed her many times. She was half-stunned, half-stupefied ; and like the Bactrian convert, the "wild childish man," in *Dramatis Personæ*, she

Could not think, nor speak, but only loved.

"Now," continued Kate, drawing her cousin's arm through hers and moving towards the door, "let us pack whatever things you want. Show them to me."

The two girls went upstairs together, and the little work of packing was soon finished. Kate had robbed the dressing-table of two or three small bottles, of which Madeleine might stand in need, and had thoughtfully secreted them in a small hand-bag. "If she should ever faint," thought Kate, "I am provided."

They had a very early dinner which Madeleine would never have thought of at all; and at five, true to his word, Ringley appeared again and was met in the hall by Kate.

"You forget me, I daresay," she said to him when he entered. "I am Madeleine's cousin, and I am going with her to-night."

"Ah!" exclaimed Ringley. "Miss Lemon. So it is! Forget you? No. Why I have heard excellent accounts of you, I assure you; or to speak more accurately, read them. Don't

think I omit my weekly survey of the *Era*. I congratulate you."

"It is best, is it not," Kate demanded, "that Madeleine should be with a woman or a girl who knows her? The two of us will try not to give you more trouble than one, Mr. Ringley. Come inside for a minute: do!"

"I am delighted," he answered, and was evidently pleased. "There is nothing, under the circumstances, that could give me more pleasure. Mrs. Warner's position is full of anxiety. I hope that together we shall be able to spare her every inconvenience from the journey except the inevitable physical fatigue."

They started. When the cab drove up to Charing Cross, Charley was there, watching the different vehicles discharge their burthens.

"A moment," whispered Kate to him rapidly, directly she alighted—and she took care, despite Ringley's protestations, to alight before the others—"a moment: let them get tickets and I'll come back and speak to you."

Ringley went to the ticket-office, and Kate with Madeleine to the waiting-room. In a minute, Miss Lemon, keeping her promise, was again outside the station with Charley. She explained to him all that she knew, and asked whether he did not think her bound to go.

"Yes," he said, "it is the only right thing, and you were a jolly little girl to see it at once. But I don't like losing you for the fortnight, you know. It is all very well to say *only* a fortnight, but it's all your holiday, or nearly all, remember."

"Charley," said Kate, taking his hand, regardless of the throng that came and went—safe perhaps from observation just because it was a throng and every one had business of his own—"Charley dear, I would give *anything* to be able to stay! Don't come further. They needn't see us. Say good-bye here. . . . I can't stand it. . . . Good-bye, Charley!"

He kissed the quivering lips, and pressed the warm firm womanly hand; then swiftly turned his back and strode away, while Kate,

with a full throat and brimming eyes, walked towards the platform. But she did not get so far without one rapid backward glance in which she saw the figure of her lover passing the gate into the Strand.

CHAPTER XXI.

FOR a night service, the journey between London and Paris was easily accomplished. Madeleine saw nothing upon the way, but she had very much to think about.

"It seems to me," she said to Kate, when, towards midnight, between two *gens d'armes*, they stepped from the steamer's plank on to the soil of France, "that we are more than half-way now to Paul—this is the Continent." To her the barrier was passed, England and the Channel were left behind, and she could not realise the miles of hillocked shore, the poplar valleys, and vine-clad slopes—the long hours of wearing travel—that divided her even now from the sick husband who had not summoned her to his side.

She had been sleepless during the English railway journey, and sleepless on the boat ; but for two hours before reaching Paris she slumbered from sheer exhaustion, and woke only as the long train glided into the station of the northern line. Paris was alive and bustling already—a great new city, other than she had read of it in England, miles away—and Madeleine, lowering the window of the cab, held her head forwards, and breathed the clear air which swept between towering house-rows along the morning streets.

Another station, breakfast hurriedly in a refreshment-room, the ceaseless clatter of conversation in an unfamiliar tongue, and then another grey-lined railway-carriage, and another long journey.

It was only small things that she noticed very closely and remembered afterwards, and of even these her recognition was almost unconscious. It is often so in a time of strained suspense or of overwhelming sorrow. Such a time stamps upon the mind some little detail

quite irrelevant to our grief, and often nothing besides. Madeleine's great trouble taught her at that moment (about the colour of French railway carriages) a fact as trivial and as fruitless as that which was conveyed to the poet of his woodspurge :

From perfect grief there need not be
Wisdom, nor even memory.
One thing then learnt remains to me—
The woodspurge has a cup of three.

Madeleine sat back in the seat, and shaded her eyes with her hand. Kate leant forwards, and gazed at the objects they were passing—fields and village-churches, country-houses, and bits of winding river. Excitement kept her from fatigue, but it was excitement unaccompanied by any strong and personal anxiety. At the Eastern Station, before starting, Ringley had bought a book so as to discourage Madeleine from talking to him, and he read this with diligence while Kate noticed the country; but after they had passed Troyes, where Ringley brought to Madeleine something to eat and drink in the carriage, and where the others

breakfasted quickly at the *buffet*, he put down his book in the hope that Kate would see fit to talk to him. She did so, and for an hour or more these two carried on an interesting conversation, which cemented their friendship. Kate had never been awkward—she had not been self-conscious enough for that—and now her recent experience of a more public life than that of the Bond Street shop and the Bond Street sewing-room, gave variety to her resources, while it added no touch of boldness to her old and charming freedom.

The day wore on. They passed Vesoul and Plombières Junction, and were now among the Vosges. A more glowing sunset than any she had seen before—a sunset in a deeper and yet a clearer sky—drew Madeleine's attention to the outside world again, as the sinking sun struck his rays from hill to hill, and flooded with warm light the valleys of Alsace. She rose, and saw this from the carriage-window; then slipped back quietly into her seat, and was silent as before.

"How pale you are, and cold-looking!" said Kate, with kind anxiety.

"I am *so* tired," Madeleine answered faintly to her,—*"tired and sick too."*

Ringley's flask held brandy, and a little was poured out for Madeleine, to revive her. Kate produced the eau-de-cologne bottle she had secreted, and chafed her cousin's hands to warm them. Soon, things looked better.

"Do we go on to-night?" asked Madeleine of Ringley. "I wish we could."

"We cannot, and if we could it would be bad for you, I'm sure. You'll get a good night's rest, I hope, and then to-morrow morning we can start all fresh again. We can get to Lucerne, I think, by a few minutes past one. That will be a capital time."

"Thanks," Madeleine answered softly, pressing Kate's hand while she spoke.

It was dusk now, and the train's speed was slackening. The long day was all but over : the journey was accomplished.

"This is our resting-place," said Ringley, as

the station's lights came into view : "our destination for to-night—Basle."

Such a clatter of strange words, quite unfamiliar now ; guttural and ugly ! Such confused activity, and seemingly hopeless disorder ! How cold the evening air that swept up the station steps ! On the top of them stood the two girls, looking down on the long row of tiny omnibuses from the inns—each omnibus quite empty, and each dimly lighted by one flickering candle in a draughty lamp.

"I suppose the big hotel will be closed," said Ringley, when they found themselves in one of the vehicles. He discovered his mistake afterwards, and on Madeleine's account, regretted it. "At all events, I have decided to go to one that is frequented by the Germans all the year round. This is only April, recollect, and the tourists have not come. What dark streets !—the sight of them makes a man grateful even for London."

They crossed the bridge over the Rhine. Madeleine was conscious of a dull near sound.

of horse's hoofs on a wooden road, and of an under sound of great volumes of water rushing below them in the darkness. Then they reached their inn.

They had some tea in the public dining-room. Kate thought of it for Madeleine as the most refreshing thing she could take. People were civil to the ladies, and a bevy of students—Frenchmen, early wandering abroad—lowered their voices as the members of the new party seated themselves at a table in the corner. No one smoked then, but the odour of bad tobacco remained in the room ; and no wonder, as some bagmen from Berlin had been blackening their pipes there all the long afternoon, since the midday dinner. There were no private sitting-rooms, or of course Ringley would have engaged one. The only thing, under the circumstances, was to go to bed early, and Madeleine was glad to do so.

“ I shall telegraph to your husband,” said Ringley, putting on his hat, “ that we are here, and expect to be in Lucerne to-morrow morn-

ing. You would rather I did so, would you not?" he asked, kindly.

"Yes, please do that. I shall be so glad."

"You are better now, I think," Ringley said, as Madeleine gave him her hand, at the bottom of the staircase. "A good night's rest, and you will feel quite yourself again."

Kate went with her to her bedroom, and unpacked the little that was needed; then helped her cousin to undress, and smoothed and arranged the white bed, high and narrow, which faced the latticed window. Kate drew aside the light short curtain for a moment, looked out, and said, "See there, the few lamps and the black mass of rushing water! Listen! That must be the Rhine, Maddy."

"The Rhine. Yes,—Switzerland."

A servant-girl, who could not speak their native tongue, came with something Kate had told Ringley they wanted, and having heard from their protector that Madeleine was journeying hurriedly to see her husband, ill at Lucerne, this maid sent another woman, who

spoke to them a little English, and did for Madeleine some simple service in a way that doubled it."

"You are so good to me!" Madeleine murmured, as Kate bent over her on the narrow bed. "Every one is so kind to me. I shall be better to-morrow."

She valued all these tokens, for they were strange and new to her; or if they brought at times an echo of old days, when Paul was with her always, that made the thought of them only more sorrowful, for the old days were so very old, and perhaps (after all she hoped) they might not be brought back through that long journey. Still there were these things for which she could be grateful:—

Small separate sympathies, combined and large :
Nothings that were, grown something very much.

Before he had got far on his way to the telegraph office, Ringley remembered that a letter would reach Lucerne as soon. Probably no telegram could be sent off that night, while if it could there was surely no chance that it

would be delivered. A letter, on the other hand, could still be posted ; and Warner would receive it in the morning. So Ringley quickly retraced his steps, and wrote a few lines which he gave to the waiter to post. Then, tired out, he went to rest.

Kate, about the same time, passed from her cousin's little room to her own, which adjoined it, and prepared for bed ; but she had scarcely begun to undress when she reflected that sleepy as she was then, she would not be likely to have leisure in the morning, and had consequently better write at once to Charley, telling him of the safe accomplishment of the greater part of their journey. She threw a shawl over her bare plump shoulders, sat down at the little plain uncovered table, and wrote rapidly the things that first occurred to her. One page, two pages, three, four, and then a little crossing ; the whole ending with " Always, dear Charley, your affectionate Kate." It was a note which would certainly gladden our young friend's heart. Ten minutes after she had

shut the inkstand, Miss Lemon was in bed and sleeping.

Morning came : too early for Ringley, who felt his responsibility as guide and care-taker of a very pleasant married woman and a most charming girl ; but as he did not shrink from trouble, he was down first, making arrangements for breakfast and departure. Breakfast for his companions was to be sent up to Madeleine's bedroom : breakfast for himself—the simple meal of coffee, honey, and bread—was to be taken in the guest-chamber. He gave these orders, and they were slowly obeyed.

When Kate, half dressed, had gone from her room into her cousin's, Madeleine was sitting on the low window-seat, looking out at the strange old town, which was seen well in the clear bright atmosphere of morning. In front of her, only divided from the house by a narrow road and narrow quay, rushed the great river, clear and blue, but broken here and there to foam, by pier and buttress of the bridge. From the opposite bank, rose an irregular row of quaint gabled

buildings, above which towered the red cathedral with its two spires, in a small square planted with trees just green with the spring-time. It was not a wonderful sight, by any means. Ringley, who saw it from below, did not think it impressive : but remember, it was the first view which Madeleine had really grasped beyond the limits of England. This was the Continent. This then was one of the aspects of the strange great land which Paul had loved to see ; which she might—had she but genuinely willed it—have seen with him, months ago. “ It seems,” thought Madeleine, “ like opening a new book. This is the first page only. Paul and I should have seen these things together.”

But there was little time for reflections or regrets. The chambermaid was in the room : breakfast was ready. They took it hurriedly. Then Kate went down and saw their friend, and asked him how soon they would start.

“ In half-an-hour, if Mrs. Warner be well enough.”

“ Oh, yes !” said Kate. “ She is much

better, thanks, and I'm sure she's longing to get on."

So the plan for departure was settled, and executed too. At nine their train left the Basle platform : at one it emerged with slackened pace from the last of the tunnels, and soon there broke upon the travellers that perfect landscape, the mountain-chains, the lesser hills that lie around Lucerne, the little city with its walls and towers and the two things which add to it their separate charms—the fresh green sparkling lake and the clear sunlit air.

CHAPTER XXII.

WHEN the porter, charged by Mrs. Greyling to deliver her message of good-bye to Warner, arrived at the villa about nine o'clock, the two servants were, as she had calculated, beginning to be uneasy at the continued silence of both master and mistress. Knowing that Warner had been unwell the previous night, they did not at first disturb themselves because he did not appear at an hour when he was usually abroad and busy ; but it was strange, they both agreed, that the lady had not left her room to go and inquire for him. Then the porter came, with the written message given at the station, and the house-boy took it to Warner's bed-chamber.

Warner had had a restless night, with fitful

snatches of the sleep that is oppressive, and long hours in which he had lain wide awake, longing for morning, and turning wearily from side to side, to find only less ease with every turn. He had gone to bed with the expectation of being well upon the morrow, but that was a vain hope. Was he then to be ill at Lucerne, and if so, who would tend him? That selfish thought came first, but it did not come alone. He reflected upon his position, and for Madeleine's sake, as well as for his own, he regretted it—the position which the dark fates had decreed for him, or into which he had fallen blindly, unconscious of its inevitable evil. Now there might come upon him, and upon Madeleine, countless disasters which he ought to have foreseen. His course, the more he thought of it, was a folly as well as a crime. Putting aside all idea of wrong, the mere worry and trouble were greater than the pleasure.

The illusions of passion are soonest and most surely dispelled by that strange com-

bination of physical weakness with the power of clear insight which is found in certain stages of approaching or departing illness. The lover, when in bodily health, is easily persuaded that no sacrifice can be greater than his mistress deserves, and that the possession of her is worth the world; but lassitude and feebleness properly correct this enthusiasm of the senses, and

The sick man sees truer,
When his hot eyes roll on her.

Warner did not, during that night, see Barbara Greyling as she really was, but he saw her at all events without the halo of morbid romance, and perceived the inconvenience she had occasioned him, and the bitter suffering which his association with her must cause the wife whose love for him had not failed. Sometimes, when the thought of his wife's loneliness and of his own infidelity had struck upon him—and it had done so not once only, nor twice, but often—he had laid as unction to his soul the assurance that had Madeleine understood

him better, and cared more truly for the Art which was religion to him, and striven only a little more assiduously to be to him the companion he needed, there would never have come between them any woman at all. It was true, indeed—yes, lamentably true—that while they lived together Madeleine had never been all that she might well have been to him. To remedy her imperfections had been a slow slow process—nay, more; it was a process not yet completed—but what was Warner, that he should treat her as worthless to him, because she was only human! The lesser fault had been hers; the greater, his—he could not but acknowledge it, after all. Thus much the sickness of one night taught him. He had more than this to learn.

When the *haus-knecht* knocked at his door in the morning, he said "Come in," and the servant had gone away again before he had opened the note. To read the few words that were written was not one minute's work. To the sick man they were a revelation.

"YOU, Mr. Warner, have shown some disposition to leave me—I relieve you of the difficulty.

" ' DOLORES.' "

That 'Dolores'—that Barbara Greyling—should leave him willingly, he had thought impossible. That she should leave him at all, he had considered unlikely. But that she should leave him in this way—it was almost more than he could even now believe. He had seen plainly enough, during that night's reflection, that he had not gained as much as he had lost by knowing her. He had seen, with greater clearness than ever before, how Madeleine had been sacrificed at one critical hour to his blind wayward passion, and had since been sacrificed continually; first to the weakness that had prevented him from tearing himself away, and then to the mistaken chivalry which had made more of the mistress's claims than of the wife's—to the unfaithful faith which "kept him falsely true." But one fact he had

not grasped until there came this message : the fact that he had been devoting himself where devotion could obtain no return. Mrs. Greyling played with human passion, and the offerings made to her were as if they had been laid upon the altar of a goddess to whom prayers and service are but wasted words and work.

The darkness which had closed around his mental vision with this woman's advent, and had clung to him like a thick cloud during her presence, was lifted now, with her departure, and with the thoughts which that departure shot into his brain. He recalled now one scene and now another in which he had struck a chord to which she could not answer : moments of aspiration which she never shared, and which the absence of all sympathy had made brief. How vain was the thought of her intellectual companionship, with which he had solaced himself in the long winter !—for he, like Madeleine, had found that winter long, and at times, however rare and few, the knowledge of his error had pressed upon him like a chain. Mrs. Grey-

ling knew more of his art than Madeleine; and to him Art was religion. She knew its details, its accumulated facts: something too of its technicalities. But she knew nothing of what it meant to him of ordered beauty and hidden yearning. Hers was the power of superficial, if necessary, accomplishments: not the power of a nature that is receptive and profound. Only Madeleine understood his hopes when he hoped the highest. Had he but told her, months ago, of all his fault—had he but repented as thoroughly as now—he could not doubt what must have been the issue. There was one woman not great in intellect, but great in love and in the purity which pardons with no pride of conscious virtue. She at least would have been only the closer to him through his experience of the evil, because the evil had taught him that good was best, in the terrible sad way ordained so often—could we but perceive it!—for our gifted men. Strong in her inward peace, wide in her pity, she at least would have forgiven all, without

the grudge of meaner natures. He could have lived thenceforth a nobler life of fruitful work. The past might have been retrieved.

But of what use were these regrets when illness threatened? Had he been well, he might have rushed to Madeleine, with sorrow in his heart, and on his tongue the accents of the prodigal. That was impossible now. He felt himself growing weaker and weaker, as the fevered blood throbbed in his temples and his lips got dry. He might never recover. He might die alone. But again, there was good hope that the sickness would pass, and if it passed he could still go to Madeleine. Had she not even that supreme sweetness which would not spurn the repentance born of disaster?

He rose to ring the bell, that the house-boy might summon a doctor; but he had hardly strength to reach the bed again. The movement brought on faintness; yet he was able to direct the servant as he wished to do. He awaited calmly the physician's visit, though weakness and fever constantly in-

creased. When the doctor came, the facts were stated. To a man of practised eye, they scarcely needed stating at all. Dangerous exposure had been followed by no preventive measure at night, and in the morning it had been followed only by violent and wearing excitement.

Left to his own reflections again, Paul had time enough to think of Madeleine, and the strong wish to return to her became a passionate longing. Out of the very depths of his heart he cried for her healing presence. At noon he had ceased to think with sequence or regularity. The man and the woman waited on him in ignorance, and wondered stupidly what should be done, and failed to understand his words even when they were plain. One was to remain with him, and the woman was first. For several hours she sat still by the window farthest from his bed ; then she opened the door softly, and slipped down the broad stairs, frightened, at dusk. The lonely house was well nigh empty, and Warner was unwatched. He was delirious.

What would have happened had his mind remained clear, who is there that can tell! It may be that he would have written, with weak and trailing pen, his confession to Madeleine, and begged her to be near him that he might know not so much her care as her forgiveness. It may be that he would have acted on what seems to have been the last of his resolutions, and have weathered the storm alone and patiently, and gone back to his wife only at a time when her mental suffering would no longer be increased by the knowledge of his bodily pain and danger. But he continued to be delirious. The doctor came twice daily, and was at just sufficient pains to try to drill the servants into some order of attendance upon the sick man, whose food was proffered him in the morning and evening, who was not left alone more than three hours together, who had his medicines at such times as his attendants happened to recollect them, and who survived this treatment thanks only to a constitution not easily crushed.

CHAPTER XXIII.

It was at two o'clock of the day on which Madeleine and her friends had left Basle, that the servants at the villa were surprised by the appearance of a fellow-countryman of Warner's—Arthur Ringley. This gentleman understood German, and what is more, Swiss German. Having seen that Paul was very ill, and utterly unfit to be questioned, he asked the house-boy much, and obtained from him something. There still lay on the dressing-table, the house-boy said, a few written words which had been brought to Warner, and which came, it was surmised, from the lady who had departed. Clearly enough, it was Ringley's business to sift the matter; to be thoroughly at home in his friend's story. Time pressed :

there was no room for hesitation. He read the little paper, and then pocketed it. It confirmed his suspicions.

What should he do? Some one must be told, yet it was awkward to tell anybody. This was a thing Kate should not know. Sad as it was, it must be disclosed to Madeleine, and he must return to her to do this difficult task.

But Madeleine had not been content to stay quietly at the inn while Ringley was getting the first news of her husband. He had insisted upon going alone, and she had not been able to dissuade him; but she became more anxious every minute of his absence, and ere he had been gone a quarter of an hour, she resolved to follow him.

"Kate," she said to her cousin, when she had paced some dozen times the bedroom floor, "it is too much to ask me to stay here, when I might be with *him*. I can't stay any more—I mean to go. Will you go with me?"

Struck by the unusual decision in Made-

leine's tone, Kate did not attempt to carry out Ringley's wish by joining her plea to his that Mrs. Warner should stay. She said at once, "Yes, Maddy, I am ready to go."

"Come then, instantly. Thank you, so very much. Though I would most certainly have started alone, you know I should have dreaded it. How shall we go?"

"I caught the name of the villa. Besides, the waiter knows where Mr. Ringley is gone. I shall tell him to get us one of those carriages—there is a stand there, see!—and we can drive all right, and quickly too. Come, Maddy, never fear!"

"So!" said Madeleine,—“that is it, exactly. How I do long to see him! And yet, anyhow, after so great a time—yes, I can tell you all—it will be terrible. Oh, Kate!"

There had been between them, two years before, a want of perfect sympathy. They were then friends—and close friends—but Kate had lacked or had appeared to lack the particular sensitiveness which seemed to Madeleine to be

essential to a lady. That was in small things only, as has been said already : never in great. All this had changed with Kate's development—with the upward growth of her pure honest nature. It was little that she lacked now.

The carriage drove fast, and the two girls were silent ; but Madeleine's hand was held in Kate's, and a glance—which meant kindness on the one side, and on the other, confidence—was exchanged as the drochska stopped at the bottom of the avenue. They walked up the short road leading only to the villa, and seeing the large double door wide open, passed inside the hall, and straight into the drawing-room opposite, of which the door was also widely open. They had seen no bell, and they were both anxious.

"There must be one in that room," said Madeleine.

Ringley was, at that moment, taking his hat from the smaller drawing-room, being just about to return to the inn to tell his difficult

story. He did not, at the first instant, hear any footsteps; nor was he on the watch for them, for he fancied the two women safe at the inn.

Kate, acting upon Madeleine's hint, went directly towards the bell-rope, and pulled it for a servant. When she turned, Ringley had entered, and Madeleine, with close-pressed lips and dilated eyes, looked white and frightened.

"He told me," she said, in a hoarse, broken voice, "that the little house was all his. He lodged quite alone here—no one with him. These things——"

She had caught sight, on coming in, of a work-basket with fancy-work, upon the table, and of a woman's garden-hat and brown kid gloves, which lay upon the couch. Besides, upon another table, there stood a woman's writing-case, still open, filled with women's stationery, scented and delicate. This also, Madeleine had seen. It was a revelation.

No one could help her much. The truth

was out. Kate was too much astonished to make any answer. Ringley knew that no reply could change the facts, nor could it hide them, nor could it break the roughness and the suddenness of the surprise. This was the thing that he had dreaded : it was the thing he had tried to guard against.

Madeleine sank somewhat heavily on to the chair which was nearest to her, and Kate approached to ask if she were ill.

"Sick. Let me be quiet."

Before Kate could bend forward to prop her up—for she was leaning over, and slipping to the chair's edge—her head had drooped aside, and she had fallen to the floor.

Ringley rushed for water ; the house-boy, answering the bell, appeared at the door to stare stupidly at the unlooked-for scene ; and Kate unfastened Madeleine's bonnet-strings, and loosened her dress. When Ringley came back he lifted her to the sofa, and she returned to consciousness with a look of wonder in the large blue-grey eyes. It was a strange place to

her, and for a minute no one spoke. Soon she remembered.

"I must go and see Paul. Where is he?"

"Lie still, lie still," said Ringley. "All in good time. Do but wait."

"Is there—is there any—"

Ringley divined, and answered promptly.

"There has been no one in the house since he was taken ill, but the two servants."

The journalist took Miss Lemon aside, and whispered to her. Then he left the room. Kate came forward again, and passed her hand over Madeleine's cold damp forehead.

"You shall go and see him, Maddy, as soon as you are strong enough."

"How is he?"

"Better than he has been, they both agree—the servants, I mean. It is fever. Are you better now?"

"Yes. Then she left him when he was taken ill! Is that it? Poor Paul! Was that natural?"

"Hateful!" cried Miss Lemon.

"She could not love him like a wife, you know. I am getting better now, to bear it. Kate, it was *very* horrible. I was so frightened. I might have met her. Think!"

Kate looked round the room with brows knit and lips closed tightly. Angry light flashed in her eyes. She stepped to the table side, where lay the woman's writing-case, and pouncing upon it, like a hawk on prey, broke it in two, and with her lissom fingers tore to pieces envelopes, letters, and quires of folded paper.

"Stop!" called Madeleine, half frightened, from the couch.

"No. I won't stop : I won't stop, Maddy. Here go her things ! I *hate* her ! There !" Kate continued, changing her tone in a moment. "I was wild with rage. Poor Maddy ! How differently you bear it ! What !—you are *ashy* pale again !"

Ringley came back, with a glass of some strong spirit, which he gave into Madeleine's

trembling hand. She could not guide the small glass to her lips. Kate helped her.

Ringley took Miss Lemon aside once more, and whispered, "She is very ill. Under her circumstances, it must be critical in the extreme. I shall go for a doctor."

And so saying, he left the room again. Kate sat down at her cousin's side. Madeleine, too ill to talk, was yet able to think. She thought of Paul—of whom else! She made all possible allowance for him; she remembered his earlier kindness, and not his later wrong. He was a man and she a woman, and she could not understand.

"Kate, you were so angry! Not with Paul, though. That mustn't be. We can't tell, you know: we who are women."

"Hush!" said Kate. "Hush! Rest, Maddy. That will do you good."

For half an hour there was silence; then, footsteps in the hall; but not until some minutes afterwards did the door open. Then Ringley entered, bringing the German doctor.

This man knelt down at Madeleine's side ; he placed his fingers on her pulse and drew out his great old silver watch ; then, rose again. He spoke to Ringley quietly, in a corner of the room. It was in English.

"Good-bye. I will come once more at about seven o'clock. The gentleman above—Mr. Warner—is no longer delirious ; as I ascertained, only a few moments ago. Tell him nothing of this, however, unless you wish to kill him. He must hear nothing whatever of the lady. *Auf wiedersehen !*" Then the old man withdrew.

Madeleine had been cold, though they had wrapped shawls round her. To attempt to move her to a bed would have been folly at that time. The long French windows, opening on to the verandah, were shut. The watchers waited in silence, looking at times outside, where were the sun and the clear air, the outstretched mountain lines and the still water.

"It is so hot," Madeleine said, after long quietness. "Air. Please give me air."

Kate fanned her forehead, while Ringley hastened to throw open the windows ; staying in that part of the room till he should be told to close them. There was no sound outside, but that of a bell, soft and low, with regular pauses : a monotony that soothed. It was the time of sunset.

"What is that I hear," asked Madeleine : "that bell in the distance ?"

"At the Monastery chapel, on one side of the Lime Trees ; just below them," said Ringley in reply. He knew Lucerne. "It strikes at sunset, every night, the Angelus—*l'Angelus du soir.*"

He did not move, for a fear fell on him ; and he would not press too closely upon Kate, who knelt by the couch side. It was to her that Madeleine spoke, now very faintly, and with pauses.

"You have both been so kind to me. My love to Paul. Many times. Say so."

"Yes."

"I longed to live with him again, to make

him happy, if I could. I think I could. . . .
Not here now. It can't be."

Kate's throat was full, and tears were on her cheeks.

"Tell Paul, another home, I go to now. . . .
Paul will come too. So must all people, where
He is 'Whose Kingdom shall have no end.'
. . . 'No end.' That means extent as well
as time: I always thought so, singing it in
church. Universal—it means that. . . . Say
to Paul, 'Whose Kingdom shall have no end.'"

The Angelus had ceased. Kate sobbed
more loudly. Ringley turned.

And she was dead.

EPILOGUE :

*Being Extracts from a Letter, dated May
2nd, 1870; from Ringley to Kate Lemon.*

“ HAVING now wearied you with writing about your performance of last evening—the first of many nights of yours, I hope, to be given to us at the Piccadilly—let me congratulate you in advance on what I hear is to happen at the season’s end : nothing less than your marriage. Be very happy : as happy as you are diligent and clever, and Mr. Charles Hassell shall never begrudge the public their pleasant share in you. . . .

“ Before you had witnessed all the sad affair of a year ago, you heard the strange story of Mr. Greyling’s money, and who had after all to

inherit it. Warner has done with it what his wife would probably have wished. The poor, and children of the poor, must be the gainers.

“As for him, during many months it seemed useless to hope for much ; but now he is in every way better, and very busy. The ancients wrote upon the statue of Time, ‘To the Consoler.’ These are the words which Warner might engrave upon a statue of Work ”

1869-1871.

THE END.

LONDON:
PRINTED BY SMITH, ELDER AND CO.,
OLD BAILEY. E.C.



